

AN EXAMINATION OF  
SELECTED NOVELS BY GRAHAM GREENE:  
WITH REFERENCE TO THE  
TEILHARDIAN CONCEPT OF  
THE WORLD AND SALVATION.

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## A B S T R A C T

In this thesis I have applied some of Teilhard de Chardin's concepts about the world, man and salvation to selected works by Graham Greene. Having found strong similarities between the subject matter and attitudes of the two writers, I believe that the comparison helps to demonstrate more clearly a systematic unity of theme and purpose in those novels I have selected, as well as offering some new insights into Greene's doctrine.

I have made use of selected writings by Teilhard, in particular Le Milieu Divin and The Phenomenon of Man, as well as critical writings on these and his other works. Besides various critical writings on Greene and his works I have selected for particular study the following novels: It's a Battlefield, Brighton Rock, The Power and the Glory, The Heart of the Matter and The End of the Affair.

In Chapter 1, I examine the interest of both writers in Péguy and compare Teilhard's main ideas on the world and salvation with the way these matters are dealt with by Greene in general. The remaining 6 chapters deal with the five novels individually and provide a summary and conclusion.

While the question of any positive influence of Teilhard's writings on Greene's own work is at present difficult to establish with certainty, there is such similarity between the concepts of Teilhard on the one hand and their fictional presentation in Greene's work on the other, that a more than coincidental link is suggested.

## CHAPTER I

### 'A HINT OF AN EXPLANATION'

#### (I) Introduction

In Greene's autobiographical account A Sort of Life we are presented with the circumstances of Greene's early years that were to give rise to those attitudes to life, God, man and the world that would play such a large and controversial part in his fictional writings.

The periods of intense loneliness, the teasing by the other boys in the strict boarding school where his father was always present but cut off from him, the chronic boredom that even "Russian Roulette" could only temporarily relieve, all gave him an early awareness of the world as a battleground where misery seemed pre-eminent in the struggle for happiness.<sup>1</sup>

The themes of the "lost childhood" and the "battleground" were to become common in his fiction, but the concern that seems to have taken on the most pervading and deepest importance (particularly in the so-called "Catholic" novels) is the problem of man's salvation in a basically sinful world. In this regard, Marković seems to emphasize the problem Greene faced and tends to overlook the hopeful solution that Greene was to arrive at and develop. "Greene sees the human situation as insolubly dark, a mousetrap in which we are caught by our birth and from which there is no escape."<sup>2</sup>

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1 V.E. Marković discusses this aspect of Greene's early world vision at some length in his article: Graham Greene in Search of God. (T.S.L.L. v:pp271-282).

2 Marković op.cit. p273.

It is my contention in this thesis that some aid to understanding and interpreting Greene's views on Man, Grace and salvation may be found in the works of Teilhard de Chardin. Both men experienced official Church disapproval, both travelled and observed man in the outposts of the world and both men found a solution to the problem of evil in emphasising God's Grace in the plan of salvation and in the everyday world.

One must obviously be careful when examining the similar ideas of two writers not to leap too readily and too generally into an assertion of the extent and effects of the influence of one upon the other. I intend, therefore, simply to indicate the connections between Teilhard and Greene and to demonstrate the possibility of gaining useful insights into Greene's ideas by comparing them with Teilhard's earlier writings.

I believe that Greene found a reflection of his own ideas and a possible solution to his search for a world/spiritual viewpoint in these same writings, but even if there had been no connection between them, Teilhard's writings can offer us a framework and a vision that, when applied to Greene's work, gives it a cohesion and unity of meaning that might not be so apparent in an individual and more superficial reading of the novels.

## (II) Teilhard and Greene: the Péguy Connection

Various biographers of Teilhard point out that he was keenly interested in Greene's writings and had in fact lectured regularly on them, especially The Power and the Glory, during his period of enforced leisure in China during

the 1940s.<sup>3</sup> Teilhard's writing was not always entirely approved of by the Catholic Church authorities and he was forbidden to publish. However, his spiritual writings and in particular the draft of what was to be published later as Le Milieu Divin (written 1926), were circulating in manuscript form around Paris and enjoyed a considerable vogue among the literary and philosophical groups of the day.

It was there that in 1929 Greene came into contact with Teilhard's ideas, or so I believe. While I freely admit this is largely conjecture, it seems almost impossible that Greene, with his awareness of the problem of evil, could fail to hear of Teilhard's radical concepts and concerns, so close to his own. He had comparatively recently converted to the Catholic faith (1926) - an intellectual, not an emotional conversion. In the literary and philosophical movements of the twenties and thirties there was a growing interest in the existential state of man and this was spurred on by the very practical experience of an evil world where Facism, poverty, unemployment and post-war disillusionment were everywhere to be seen. In such circumstances I think I can reasonably conjecture that Greene was aware of Teilhard's work and many echoes of Teilhard's expression and concepts are to be found in Greene's later works.

In Teilhard, Greene would have seen a kindred spirit, or certainly a more systematic formulation of his own deep feelings about God, man, the world and salvation.

Both men shared a respect for Péguy, a writer Greene

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3 Teilhard de Chardin: A Biographical Study - Claude Cuenot. (English trans. 1965 Helicon Press). London, Burns & Oates, p236.  
Charles E. Raven. Teilhard de Chardin: Scientist and Seer, London, Collins, pl03, 1962.

was later to quote and refer to in many works. However I will deal later and in more detail with Greene's relationship to Péguy's concepts.

Returning at present to a consideration of Teilhard, Hague comments: "It is easy to understand Teilhard's sympathy with Péguy's work, centred as it was on the mystery of the Incarnation... 'the centre of gravity is provided by the Incarnation, not by the Cross and Resurrection. The emphasis is on the assumption of human and temporal values by Christ, who saves them, rather than on the death of the sinful world' [Péguy] ... At the same time Péguy, even more no doubt than Teilhard, had an acute sense of human misery and the necessity for a redemption."<sup>4</sup> Greene shared deeply in this sense. Again it is stated: "If [Teilhard] liked Péguy, and took pleasure, during the 1914 war, in feeling that he was close to him, it was primarily because Péguy, in his Eve, had succeeded in paying a worthy tribute to Christ's 'carnal cradle'."<sup>5</sup>

As the prime concern of this thesis is with Greene himself, I shall not investigate exhaustively the relationship between the works and ideas of Péguy and Teilhard. It is sufficient to indicate that connection between their ideas and writings, as it has already been dealt with at some length in the works referred to in the footnotes. Instead I shall now move to a brief examination of the relationship between the thought of Péguy and Greene's

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4 Teilhard de Chardin: A Guide to his thought - trans. Rene Hague. London. Collins. p646. 1967.

5 The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin - Henri de Lubac, trans. R. Hague. London, Collins. p61. 1967.

works, in an effort to support my contention that a further similarity between Teilhard and Greene is found in their common interest in Péguy's ideas.

Grahame C. Jones in his study of Greene and Péguy<sup>6</sup> points out several references to Péguy in Greene's work. Jones claimed that the story told in Brighton Rock as part of the old priest's attempt to console Rose after Pinkie's death is largely, in fact, the story of Péguy himself , "...a Frenchman...a good man, a holy man, [who] lived in sin all through his life, because he couldn't bear the idea that any soul could suffer damnation...This man decided that if any soul was going to be damned, he would be damned too... I don't know, my child, but some people think he was - well, a saint...You can't conceive, my child, nor can I or anyone - the ...appalling...strangeness of the mercy of God."

Jones also links Greene's preoccupation with Péguy to his later "obsession" with voluntary damnation as seen in Rose's desire to join Pinkie in suicide and damnation in Brighton Rock, the whisky priest's wish to damn himself in exchange for Brigitta in The Power and the Glory, Scobie's similar desire in The Heart of the Matter, and Sarah's in The End of the Affair.<sup>7</sup> While agreeing that Greene makes use of Péguy's life and ideas I cannot accept that, as Jones says: "Greene has forged for himself a heroic legend of Péguy the renegade, Péguy the defender of the damned against the retributions of God."<sup>8</sup> Especially so when Jones continues to compare Péguy's action to Scobie's in The Heart of the Matter, holding that it is in both cases the "generosity"

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6 Grahame C. Jones. "Graham Greene and the Legend of Péguy," in Comparative Literature XXI Spring ppl38-145.

7 G.C. Jones, op.cit. pl40.

8 ibid. pl39.



erratum

In the pagination page 7 has been omitted. Therefore  
p 8 is the continuation of material on page 6.

of this self-damning for others out of pity that Greene in some way admires and on which he is laying the emphasis of his lesson.

In contrast, I believe it is the more mystical lesson that Greene wishes to present. As the old priest said: "You can't conceive, my child, nor can I or anyone - the... appalling strangeness of the mercy of God." It is not the actions of Péguy and Scobie, nor their motivations that are important, but rather God's reaction to them, the "appalling" (because it is above and beyond all normal standards of justice, revenge, merit, etc.) mercy or Grace of God. This notion is repeated, with very little change to the wording and none at all to the meaning, in all of the novels I have selected, e.g. in The Heart of the Matter the priest attempts to reassure Louise: "For goodness' sake, Mrs Scobie, don't imagine you - or I - know a thing about God's mercy."

Péguy is thus important to both Teilhard and Greene for the problems and concerns he raises about evil and salvation. His reaction is also important, for it is a reaction arising from reason not from faith. As with Scobie, it is pride that, unable to see beyond the surface appearance of chaos and injustice, must take upon itself the judgement and the remedy. For Teilhard and for Greene, this is not the answer. Rather there must be an abandonment to faith.

In fact it is through faith, and particularly hope, that Péguy eventually found his reconciliation with God,<sup>9</sup> an action that the whisky priest in The Power and the Glory can do, but one of which Scobie, in his pride, is incapable.

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9 As did Greene, according to Markovic: "Searching in his mind for a way out of the hopeless muddle, he found that man could be saved and that his life could acquire a meaning only through religious faith" V.E. Markovic, Graham Greene in Search of God, in Texas Studies in Literature and Language, v, pp271-282.

Yet even Scobie's future is unknown, for the reader too must not judge but leave it to the "appalling...strangeness...of the mercy of God."

Having briefly noted the influence of Péguy on both Greene and Teilhard, I examine now in more detail those aspects of Teilhard's theology and cosmology that find an expression in Greene's fiction.

### (III) The Evolutionary Struggle: The Spiritual and Secular Battleground

Teilhard firmly believed in a twofold evolution of mankind, spiritual as well as biological, and one essential aspect of the spiritual evolution was, on both the individual and collective level, expanding consciousness - an awareness of the "greater reality". "Consciousness is awareness of something within oneself."<sup>10</sup>

The origin and sustaining force of this evolution was "a single energy operating in the world....In each particular element this fundamental energy is divided into two distinct components: a tangential energy which links the element with all others of the same order...and a radial energy which draws it towards ever greater complexity and centricity - in other words forward."<sup>11</sup> Part of the misery and frustration experienced by those in the world, particularly would-be reformers, lies in the fact that they do not recognize and sometimes even attempt to obstruct the spiritual element in this radial energy. "The secular religions of progress do not ultimately move man

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<sup>10</sup> A.V. Knight. The Meaning of Teilhard de Chardin: A Primer, Old Greenwich, The Devin Adair Coy. p83, 1974.

<sup>11</sup> ibid p93.

into the evolutionary stream because they regard the world as a dead end and the universe as a closed system."<sup>12</sup>

This seems a most appropriate theoretical statement of the contrasting attitudes and values underlying the actions and aspirations of the lieutenant and the whisky priest in The Power and the Glory. As the lieutenant ponders on life he thinks: "He was a mystic, too, and what he had experienced was vacancy - a complete certainty in the existence of a dying, cooling world, of human beings who had evolved from animals for no purpose at all."<sup>13</sup> His ambition is therefore limited to the material level and because of that it must ultimately fail to be completely fruitful or satisfying. "Those men I shot. They were my own people. I wanted to give them the whole world."<sup>14</sup>

Similarly, Ida in Brighton Rock cannot move forward into the higher element and prefers, like the lieutenant, the path of "faithless good works", "...in the dark depths of her Guinness, kindness winked up at her, a bit shy, a bit earthy, having a good time."<sup>15</sup>

Besides those who, like the lieutenant, consciously stay outside the Christian faith, Teilhard points out those who while within it "often think they are honouring Christianity when they reduce it to a sort of gentle humanitarianism."<sup>16</sup> The essential fault of such characters lies in a lack of recognition of "the power of love, the cosmic energy of the spirit...[without which] ...there can be no true union

12 A.V. Knight. op.cit. p93.

13 G. Greene. The Power and the Glory, Penguin, p24, 1972. (All future references to this work refer to this ed.).

14 ibid p198.

15 G. Greene. Brighton Rock, Penguin, p30, 1971. (All future references to this work refer to this edition).

16 A.V. Knight. op.cit. p98.

of human beings. Without interior bonds of union, we have only organization imposed from outside...and all beings, even if they appear to be in contact, are separated by an unbridgeable abyss."<sup>17</sup> Thus Ida in Brighton Rock can never, despite her "right" intentions, convert Rose away from her love for Pinkie; the lieutenant in The Power and the Glory is unable to relate deeply to the people he "loves" and wishes to help; Conrad in It's a Battlefield cannot right the injustice done to Drover, and Scobie in The Heart of the Matter brings only sorrow and distress through his attempts at organizing life from outside.

All these characters suffer from what is, in Teilhard's eyes, a fault that is intrinsically linked with the human condition. "Too pragmatic a concern for man's future overshadows both the present need for the absolute at every moment of our existence and the thought of an eternal beyond all time. Anyone who abandons himself, without counterbalancing considerations, to such concern, tends to confuse ... 'the transformation of society' with 'the establishment of the Kingdom of God.'"<sup>18</sup>

This battleground between the worldly and the greater spiritual realities has become an important theme for Greene and it is made manifest in the settings, characters and plots of his novels. It is important to remember, however, that the presentation of the evil world and the everpresent struggle against it are not ends in themselves. They are merely backdrops against which the solution to the problem might be more effectively seen. "Greene's pessimism is

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<sup>17</sup> A.V. Knight, op.cit. p98.

<sup>18</sup> H. de Lubac, op.cit. pp28-29.

nothing more than the setting for the grand issue."<sup>19</sup>

I have indicated so far that both Teilhard and Greene had a strong vision of a sinful world and the hopelessness of finding a worldly solution to the problems it poses. I move now to a consideration of what I believe both men saw as the key element in a possible solution.

(IV) The Heart of the Matter: the Incarnation in Teilhard and Greene

For Teilhard and Greene, what has transformed man's possibilities and provided a source of hope in a world of misery is the Incarnation of Christ. His presence came into the world in a real sense, and, as earlier discussed, a basic tenet that I believe Péguy, Teilhard and Greene shared. Along with this idea of the Incarnation of Christ in history, in time, we find the concept of Christ's continuing presence as remaining the "heart" or sustaining life fount of all existence, constantly initiating, impelling and underlying "evolution" in the Teilhardian sense of the term.

Knight explains it thus: "At the centre of [Teilhard's] life and thought...is the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, the unity of divinity and humanity...all beings are ontologically suspended from Christ and have no meaning apart from Him." Christ, for Teilhard, is the organic centre of the universe.... [God unifies the world]... 'by practically immersing himself in things, by becoming "element" and then, from this point of vantage in the heart of the matter, assuming the control and leadership of what we now call "evolution"'. [section Knight quotes is from The Phenomenon of Man.]<sup>20</sup>

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19 R.M. Haplon ., "Graham Greene's Religious Sense" in Dissertation Abstracts 32: p4001A 1972.

20 A.V. Knight, op.cit. pl29, pl33.

This explanation is enlarged upon by de Lubac. The believer must therefore seek "God alone". "In the heart of every substance and every action... [Teilhard] shows...in God at once the Heart and the Beyond of all things; for in the convergent and dynamic universe of his concept the Heart lies beyond and the Beyond lies at the heart of all....In this lies the explanation and the basis of the spiritual thesis of Le Milieu Divin...which tells us that God is to be sought not by rejecting created beings but through them."<sup>21</sup> The problem for many lies in not being able to seek beyond created things for their own sake.

Clearly then, this fact of the Incarnation holds a vital place in Teilhard's scheme of salvation, and I believe it holds an equally important position for Greene. In the face of a very real sense of the "fallen creation" doomed to struggle blindly in the darkness, Greene could have found hope only in something beyond the world and man himself. I believe he found this in the elevation of man's "evolutionary stream" by the Incarnation of Christ. This and this alone is what offers any hope of escape from the state of the fallen world, for God-in-man can bring man to God.

One of the clearest acknowledgements by Greene of the essential truth and importance of this on-going Incarnation presence is presented through the whisky priest in The Power and the Glory. When he is contemplating man's sinfulness in prison, he is overcome by a realization of the ubiquitous Incarnate presence of God. "But at the centre of his own faith there always stood the convincing mystery - that we

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21 H.de Lubac op.cit. pp31-33, p98.

were made in God's image. God was the parent, but He was also the policeman, the criminal, the priest, the maniac, and the judge...and God's image did its despairing act of rebellion with Maria in the hut among the rats."<sup>22</sup> Not even the sinner can rid himself of the eternal fact of God's presence in him through the Incarnation; he may be ignorant of it or reject it, but he cannot change the fact of it. When the priest later reaches the defaced statues in the ruined church he thinks: "It was odd - this fury to deface, because, of course, you could never deface enough. If God had been like a toad, you could have rid the globe of toads, but when God was like yourself, it was no good being content with stone figures - you had to kill yourself among the graves."<sup>23</sup>

However, despite the presence of this "Heart of the world" and man's ontological dependence on Him, man is still faced with the problem of evil, both physical and spiritual. It is to this aspect I now turn my attention.

#### (V) The Problem of Evil: A Common Solution

Various critics are very ready to comment unfavourably on Greene's apparent "obsession" with sin and the sinner, seeing in Greene's work such widespread deviations as "Augustinianism, Jansenism, and Manicheism. Others descry unchristian pessimism, an unorthodox brand of Existentialism ...a seriously questionable ambiguity in theological matters ..."<sup>24</sup> Others, more concerned with the psychological aspect,

<sup>22</sup> G. Greene. The Power and the Glory p101.

<sup>23</sup> ibid. p102.

<sup>24</sup> J.P.Kelleher. "The Orthodoxy and Values of Graham Greene" in Dissertation Abstracts XXVII p1825, 1976.



such as Marković, see Greene's world as "insolubly dark, a mousetrap from which there is no escape...the irretrievable human situation, the fact that man is invariably doomed to meet catastrophe."<sup>25</sup>

Such critics have, I believe, missed the point of Greene's doctrine. Greene is concerned with the sinner and with the dark sinful world, but simply because he is concerned with the world as it is in terms of Christian cosmology and because it is precisely through the presentation of the sinner that we see most clearly the "appalling" mystery of God's Grace. There is no wonder in the salvation of a good man, human justice expects as much, and Ida demands it with her call for "justice" and "an eye for an eye" in Brighton Rock. It is in overriding mere human justice and in challenging our normal expectations and judgements that Greene lifts his characters and his readers into the mysterious realm of God's mercy.

Péguy, Teilhard and Greene all had to come to terms with the problem of evil. However, while Péguy's reaction, like Scobie's in The Heart of the Matter, was a refusal to accept the mystery and a clinging in pride to a worldly standard of judgement that amounted to a usurpation of God's judgemental role and a refusal to acknowledge the limitation of the human vision, Teilhard and Greene both stress the mystery element and the necessity for a "trust in God" and in His ultimate goodness. This is the "hint" of an explanation that Scobie cannot accept.

Teilhard expounds the problem in this way in The

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25 V. Marković . . . op.cit. p273.

Phenomenon of Man: "Yes, the more man becomes man, the more serious becomes the problem of evil and the more ingrained in his flesh, his nerves and his mind, the problem of understanding evil and suffering it."<sup>26</sup> Again in Le Milieu

Divin: "Humanly speaking, the internal passivities of diminishment form the darkest element and the most despairingly useless years of our life. Some were waiting to pounce on us as we first awoke: natural failings, physical defects, intellectual or moral weaknesses, as a result of which the field of our activities, of our enjoyment, of our vision, has been pitilessly limited since birth. Others were lying in wait for us later on and appeared so suddenly and brutally as an accident, or as stealthily as an illness. All of us one day or another will come to realize, if we have not already done so, that one or other of these sources of disintegration has lodged itself in the very heart of our lives."<sup>27</sup> How similar this idea seems to Greene's awareness of the "hell" around us from infancy on; and a brief survey of his characters will reveal ample illustration of the presence of these "diminishments".

In The End of the Affair we find the Rationalist, Richard Smythe with his strawberry birthmark; we see in Brighton Rock the social and moral diminishments resulting from the physical and spiritual environment of Pinkie and Rose; we see the same effects on Luis, Coral and Brigitta in The Power and the Glory. All experience these "passivities of diminishment" to some extent, either from birth, environment, or later decisions and events, and so Greene

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<sup>26</sup> R. Hague, op.cit. note 91, p449.

<sup>27</sup> P. Teilhard de Chardin, Le Milieu Divin, Collins, Fontana, pp81-82, 1965. (All future references refer to this edition).

gives considerable fictional realization to this important concept of Teilhard's scheme.

For Teilhard, the idea of "heart" is complicated; not only does he refer to the presence of God's Grace in man through the Incarnate Christ as the "Heart" that leads to the beyond and salvation, but the "heart" of man also contains the possibilities for damnation by allowing the "internal passivities of diminishment" to become not a source of spiritual growth, but through pride in refusing to accept them in a spirit of trust, the source also of our possible downfall. Greene is very aware of the "heart" in this sense as the seat of sentimental, emotional judgement, the desire to judge and organize both one's self and others.

Teilhard's answer is clear. Trust in God and humility are called for on man's part. "God cannot ordain that the elements in a world in the course of growth...should avoid shocks and diminishments, even moral ones....But God will make it good - he will take his revenge, if one may use the expression - by making evil itself serve a higher good of his faithful, the very evil which the present state of creation does not allow him to suppress immediately.... God transfigures them by integrating them in a better plan - provided we lovingly trust in him."<sup>28</sup>

Here then, is a partial answer to the problem of a loving God and an evil world, acceptance of suffering and evil through faith in God's goodness and trust in His wider vision. Greene examines man's attempts or failures to attempt this solution. For instance, Ida Arnold in Brighton Rock is unable to accept this attitude. "Somebody had made Fred unhappy, and somebody was going to be made unhappy in

turn. An eye for an eye. If you believed in God, you might leave vengeance to him.... Vengeance was Ida's, just as much as reward was Ida's.... And vengeance and reward - they were both fun."<sup>29</sup>

Scobie in The Heart of the Matter cannot accept it, despite his earlier glimpse of a "hint of an explanation". Before his suicide the voice of Grace speaks to him calling for the response of trust: "I made you with love. I've wept your tears. I've saved you from more than you will ever know.... And now you push me away, you put me out of your reach.... Can't you trust me as you'd trust a faithful dog?... One of them [Helen or Louise] will suffer, but can't you trust me to see that the suffering isn't too great?... his own voice replied hopelessly: No. I don't trust you. I've never trusted you."<sup>30</sup>

Precisely because Ida and Scobie lack that trust in God, their "passivities of diminishment" remain as such, preventing both personal progress in the Christic Evolutionary sense and limiting their effect on others to that attempt to "organize from the outside" that both Teilhard and Greene see as doomed to failure and frustration.

On the other hand, through their ability to trust God and accept their "passivities of diminishment" in a spirit of faith, both the whisky priest and Sarah are able to find their own salvation and help others towards it also. They have, in Teilhardian terms, converted their "passivities of diminishment" into "blessed passivities".

Although the whisky priest undergoes periods of pride,

29 Brighton Rock, p36.

30 G.Greene. The Heart of the Matter in The Portable Graham Greene ed. Philip Stafford N.Y. Viking Press, p335, 1975. (All future references to this work refer to this edition).

doubt, despair and fear, he is able to find that trust in the face of the problem of evil. He accepts the mystery. "God is love. I don't say the heart doesn't feel a taste of it, but what a taste. The smallest glass of love mixed with a pint pot of ditch water. We wouldn't recognize that love. It might even look like hate. It would be enough to scare us - God's love."<sup>31</sup>

In The End of the Affair, Sarah has that trust, although her Rationalist associate has not and so must demand: "Why should I love a God who gives a child this [birthmark]?" Bendrix also has trouble reaching beyond the problem of evil, but at least recognizes the need for trust in God if He exists. "For if this God exists, I thought, and if even you - with your lusts and your adulteries and the timid lies you used to tell - can change like this, we could all be saints by leaping as you leapt, by shutting the eyes and leaping once and for all: if you are a saint, it's not so difficult to be a saint."<sup>32</sup>

It is, in the final analysis, this trust or lack of trust in God that separates Greene's characters. The important factor in their salvation seems to be faith rather than works, and to this extent Greene lies in the Pauline tradition of salvation theology. It was this same emphasis on the faith element in salvation (seeming at the time to lurk dangerously near Protestant rather than Catholic theology, and seeming to allow only faith and Grace as means of salvation and so hint at elements of predestination) that caused Teilhard's work to be banned for a time by Church

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31 The Power and the Glory, pp199-200.

32 G.Greene. The End of the Affair, London, Heinemann, p235, 1951. (All future references to this novel refer to this edition).

authorities. This aspect of rebelliousness and unorthodoxy in Teilhard's works would have been proved an attraction rather than a deterrent to the young Greene whose own works would eventually be banned by Church authorities for similar reasons.

Just as Greene had been troubled with the problem of evil since his childhood, Teilhard had also been considering it long before his formulation in Le Milieu Divin. From a letter written in 1917 we read, "Finally and not without reason, [man] is incessantly distressed by the crazy indifference and the heartbreaking dumbness of a natural environment, in which the greater part of individual endeavour seems wasted or lost...we must accept all those hostile forces in a spirit of faith and so convert them into blessed passivities." Again, from a letter of 1919, "We must realize that the soul begins to know God only when it is really forced to suffer diminishment in him."<sup>33</sup> It is the refusal, through pride, resentment or rejection of faith, to accept diminishment in this spirit of trust, that holds back spiritual evolution, and because of the tangential bond we hold back others at the same time.

Therefore this fault becomes doubly serious, for we affect others as well as ourselves, just as by moving forward in the stream, through faith, we carry forward all those with whom we are united in Christ's Incarnation. Compare the way Greene presents Sarah in The End of the Affair as opening the possibilities of salvation up to Bendrix, Parkis, and Henry because of her trust, and the way that Scobie in The Heart of the Matter seems to spread

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33 H.de Lubac, op.cit. pp35-35.

misery and distrust in the wake of his untrusting attempts at organization of worldly happiness that he sees as his "duty".

I believe the answer for Greene was the same as for Teilhard. "[Teilhard] saw a drama, in the course of which man advances only through successive crises; each step forward being paid for by 'a vast series of disorders and sufferings' ...finally, the progress achieved will be no true progress unless spirit finally emerges from the adventure as the undisputed victor".<sup>34</sup> Faith is the means of doing this, as Teilhard says: "when the believer has penetrated into Christ, the world loses for him its multiplicity, its burden, its harshness and bitterness. Flesh and spirit still suffer - but the faith of the sufferer discloses in his very suffering the prodigious spiritual energy generated by the cross." On the other hand, "Once my faith unhappily grows weak, the light is immediately extinguished, everything disintegrates."

For both Teilhard and Greene, it seems that one part of the solution lies in trust in God, or "faith" and humility that acknowledge man sees only pieces of the jigsaw, while God alone can see the completed puzzle. There is another part to the solution that Teilhard and Greene share, and that is Grace, God's mercy, without which man's works (like those of Ida Arnold and the lieutenant) come to nothing in the deepest sense of man's destiny. This is the next consideration.

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34 H.de Lubac, op.cit. p41.

(VI) Grace: The Appalling Strangeness of the Mercy of God

Grace, the sustaining and redemptive force, cannot simply be earned by man but is freely given by God for man to accept or reject. Man's free will remains unimpeded and all, like Scobie, have the choice of accepting or rejecting God's call. For Teilhard, "a breeze passes in the night. When did it spring up?... Whence does it come? Whither is it going? No man knows. No-one can compell the spirit, the gaze or the light of God to descend upon him."<sup>35</sup>

It is this Grace which, once accepted, will give man the strength to accept in faith the "passivities" and find salvation. Teilhard offers his reader a model in one of his letters (1919). "'Christus factus est obediens usque ad mortem crucis!'. That is obviously the exact and profound significance of the cross: obedience, submission to the law of life - and to accept everything, in a spirit of love, including death, there you have the essence of Christianity. When the Christian seems finally to have lost the battle, it is through the cross that he triumphs in Christ. When he seems to sink more into death, in reality 'he rises up into the light'!"<sup>36</sup> In The Power and the Glory, from his first acceptance of his mission to the dying woman, the whisky priest/Christ figure moves unsteadily but inevitably towards his "cross" to triumph in Luis's faith.

This gratuitous aspect of Grace is fundamental to both Greene and Teilhard. It is offered to all to accept or reject.<sup>37</sup> Accepted, it will have its fruit in faith that will find salvation. Rejected, it halts man in the worldly

35 Le Milieu Divin

36 H. de Lubac, op.cit. p58.

37 George Gaston, "Forms of Salvation in the Novels of Graham Greene," in Dissertation Abstracts 35, pl655, 1974.



level and holds him back from salvation. However, there is another most important factor, only God can ultimately bestow it and know whether it is accepted or rejected and both writers warn of the folly and impossibility of trying to judge another's salvation.

For Teilhard, Grace is the unknowable, uncontrollable "breeze"; for Greene it can be the inner voice that calls to Scobie or the "something beating to get in" that perturbs Pinkie. In every case it is "the appalling strangeness of the mercy of God" that can offer salvation even "between the stirrup and the ground".

(VII) The Comparison: an overview and explanation

Having discussed the ideas of Teilhard on the problem of evil, faith and Grace, and noted the common interest in Péguy, I believe there is a case for using Teilhard's concepts as a framework within which Greene's doctrine can be seen to take on a consistency and a controlled unity of message that many critics seem to have neglected. The question as to Greene's actual contact with Teilhard's writings and their possible influence on him is one I hope to pursue further, but as yet, unfortunately, difficulties of time and distance have required that for the present I must simply conjecture (on the grounds of common interests and the availability to Greene of Teilhard's writings) that there may be a causal connection. Because of this fact I have tried to restrict my thesis to an examination of Greene's doctrine in the light of Teilhard's ideas rather than to the proposition of an influential relationship of one upon the other.

Even with this restriction, Greene's work seems to express Teilhard's concepts remarkably closely, as will become more apparent in the individual novel studies. Whereas

Teilhard offers a theological examination of the problem of man's state in the world and a solution, Greene offers us in his novels the dramatic expression of the same problem and solution.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE SENSE OF EVIL: "IT'S A BATTLEFIELD"

I have selected this novel for inclusion in my study because it presents us with an attempt, by Greene, to examine the problem of evil in the world, and offers a hint of a solution, but does not yet fully investigate that solution.

A Sort of Life and The Lawless Roads reveal to us Greene's early sense of a hellish world. "One began to believe in heaven because one believed in hell, but for a long while it was only hell one could picture with a certain intimacy."<sup>1</sup> However it is not simply an evil world, but it is also one of constant tension and conflict, and throughout his work Greene presents the world as a political, social, moral and spiritual battlefield.

In It's a Battlefield, all the social and political institutions are seen as repressive and soul-destroying. Beale confuses the girls' school with the prison; while the geography of the prison itself, with its separate processing areas, is clearly reflected in the factory production line.<sup>2</sup> A similar double image is presented in the elements of the grave which Greene uses in his imagery of the prison. "Shadows fell like earth from a tilted spade;"<sup>3</sup> and again "the breathing fell on them, as they stood in the well of the building, like the dropping of soft mould."<sup>4</sup>

1 G. Greene. The Lawless Roads, London, Heinemann, p5, 1960.

2 G. Greene. It's a Battlefield, Heinemann, revised edition, pp15-16 1948. (All future references to this novel refer to this edition).

3 ibid. p15.

4 ibid. p17

Greene's image and message are clear; the prison is the image of the grave, but the prison/grave is also the image of the school and the factory. The world seems a tomb where man is decaying and lifeless.

However there *is* a life of sorts in this tomb, albeit a savage "animal" life. In Greene's presentation, life becomes a survival of the fittest, the "law of the jungle", and it is the Assistant Commissioner who constantly reminds us of this as he sees in the world around him echoes of his time in the jungle "...and the cold washed air did not prevent his thoughts going back to damp paths steaming in the heat under leaves like hairy hands."

Even in this comparatively early stage of the working out of Greene's doctrine of salvation, we can perceive a clear sympathy with the Teilhardian sense of individuation and isolation. "We carry within us, as a continuous deep vibration of which our individual agonies and intoxications are passing harmonics, the dull gnawing pain of the individuation by which the separation of beings is maintained and their plurality persists."<sup>5</sup> (This sense of abandonment and isolation will be seen more clearly presented in the whisky priest of The Power and the Glory, Scobie in The Heart of the Matter, and Pinkie in Brighton Rock).

So important to Greene were these twin concepts of fundamental isolation and conflict in the world of man, that Greene adopts a quotation from Kinglake as an epigraph for the novel. "In so far as the battlefield presented itself to the bare eyesight of men, it...was made up of nothing except small numberless circlets commensurate with

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5 H. de Lubac. op.cit. pp37-8.

such ranges of vision as the mist might allow at each spot.... In such conditions, each separate gathering of English soldiery went on fighting its own little battle in happy and advantageous ignorance of the general state of the action; nay, even very often in ignorance of the fact that any great conflict was raging."

This is the essential state of those who fail to recognize "the cosmic energy of the spirit... [without which]...there can be no true union of human beings...and all beings, even if they appear to be in contact, are separated by an unbridgeable abyss."<sup>6</sup> For both Teilhard and Greene, man finds himself alone in a confused and hostile world.

The image of the battlefield, as representing a state of tension and conflict, is found in Greene's other works also. In The Lawless Roads he says: "The world is all of a piece of course, it is engaged everywhere in the same subterranean struggle...there is no peace anywhere there is life, but there are...quiet and active sectors of the line." However, for both writers, the real battle is not the social or political one, although where man is evolving, these will always be an integral part of that evolution; the real conflict is a spiritual one, and it is in the spiritual domain, not the physical, that the worst casualties occur.

The Assistant Commissioner shows some awareness of the intensity of the spiritual sufferings possible in the "inner circle" of hell, but he refuses to allow his individuation to be moved enough to enable him to really sympathize

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6 A.V. Knight. op.cit. p98.

with other than those in the "outer circle", the material sufferers. "This was not the worst pain, hope and fear in a cell, visits from the Chaplain; he had a dim memory that someone had once mapped out hell in circles...and he thought 'this is only the outer circle'." <sup>7</sup>

Greene emphasizes the point that most live out their lives in awareness of only this "outer circle" of realized suffering, by mentioning the train, symbol of modern, confined urban man, which "at each station on the Outer Circle...stopped every two minutes."

For Teilhard, with his concept of "individuation", and for Greene, man is essentially alone in the midst of a vast bureaucratic, social and spiritual battlefield. The world is a place of selfish misunderstanding, manipulation, oppression and superficiality and man must struggle as best he can. "It often occurred to him [the Commissioner] that he was less the general in control than the private soldier fighting in a fog...in a flurry of self-presentation." <sup>8</sup> It is important to remember that Greene's main purpose in this novel is not to examine the solution, but rather to present a vivid and clearly defined impression of the essential and ontological state of fallen man in a fallen world. This provides the backdrop against which he can examine the various characters' struggles to find some solution.

Greene achieves this by building up a cumulative picture of man and the world through the use of minor background details of the setting, and by the superficially interwoven yet essentially separate and selfish lives of his major and minor characters.

7 It's a Battlefield, p19.

8 ibid. p191.

The scapegoat, Drover, becomes ever less important as a subject of the newspaper hoardings as the early sensationalism and "entertainment value" of his case is superceded, at first by other news and soon by pure banality, "Spot the Stars"; "Are You Insured?" His problem means nothing to society apart from a temporary discussion topic. In Greene's world even the inanimate seems to share the people's desire to forget a stranger's difficulty. "Poster after poster flapping up...then falling again, like time burying the old news deep:"<sup>9</sup> Everything is made to contribute to the impression of individual isolation.

Even those who should care for Drover's wellbeing, his comrades in the Communist Party, are more concerned with his value as publicity than with Drover himself. For the public at large and for his "comrades" Drover has served his purpose. He has brought some glimmer of interest into their drab existence, but even this interest is impersonal and superficial. Man stands alone in a cold and hostile world.

Not only is the world a hostile and miserable place, but confusion and illusion also dominate it. Conrad's determined pursuit and eventual attempt to shoot the Commissioner, are based on a misapprehension. He believed he heard the Commissioner laughing with callous amusement at his brother's case; whereas in fact it was the secretary who had laughed and merely at a pram on top of a passing taxi. During their prison visit, the Commissioner and secretary are informed about a prisoner: "'He's a wonderful reciter. Real artistes we have here...' 'What did he do?'

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9 It's a Battlefield, p85.

the secretary asked. 'Tried to cut somebody's throat or something *silly* of that sort.'"(emphasis mine)<sup>10</sup> Perception, communication and values are distorted in a chaotic world overshadowed by the image of the grave and the prison.

Greene uses the scenery to reinforce the image of the dark depressing world, "...the lights from the Embankment crossed the grey flow, touched two barges piled with paper, rested on the mud and the stranded boats...through a wilderness of trams and second-hand clothes-shops and public lavatories."<sup>11</sup> However this serves only as a backdrop to emphasize the image of man's isolation and struggle. For Teilhard and Greene the essential feature of the world is man's "individuation", and all the characters remain in their own individual worlds.

Condor invents a family and achievements in order to give himself some identity. At Caroline Bury's dinner party, Surrogate and Crabbe are wrapt in their own worlds and are unable to communicate other than at cross purposes. Conrad is at least aware of this isolation and warns Milly of it: "'We're alone,'"and sees "his glass room [at work]...a tiny raft of security." However his security is false, for while he can see the others and so overcome temporarily his sense of isolation, he is effectively cut off from them by the invisible but very real barrier of the glass. The image Greene presents is very similar to Teilhard's view, already mentioned, that "all beings, even if they appear to be in contact, are separated by an unbridgeable abyss."<sup>12</sup>

It is the desire to avoid this overwhelming sense of

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10 It's a Battlefield, p14.

11 ibid. p12.

12 A.V. Knight. op.cit. p.98.



loneliness that throws Conrad and Milly together. However, their union is a negative event because Conrad (like Scobie in The Heart of the Matter) is motivated by pity, not by genuine unselfish love. In Greene's system, pity is never a virtue, but rather a mortal failing and corollary of pride. This concept is discussed more fully in the chapter dealing with The Heart of the Matter, but I believe it is necessary at this stage to point out that I am in complete disagreement with an estimation of Greene's view of pity such as that presented by Barbara Seward. "Pity in a guilty world is to Greene not only the most likely but the highest possible form of love. It is in the first place uninfected with sensuality, selfishness or happiness, all of which he finds incompatible with the attainment of virtue. And in the second place, pity is our feeble but nonetheless closest approach to the vast, merciful compassion that God must feel for the sin-sick man."<sup>13</sup>

It is because pity is a corollary of pride and so distances one individual from another, rather than uniting them in the way true compassion can, that Teilhard and Greene class it as a failing rather than a virtue. For Conrad it is the uninvolvedness, the sense of superiority inherent in his pity for Drover's wife, that enables them to have what is merely a selfish and superficial contact. "If he had felt the slightest lust, he would have fled; it was the unexcitement in his love, the element of pity, that kept him there."<sup>14</sup> Pride preserves individuation, as does pity.

For both Teilhard and Greene, individuating pity is not

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13 B. Seward. "Graham Greene: A Hint of an Explanation," in The Western Review, 22:2 p91, 1958.

14 It's a Battlefield, pl43.

to be confused with compassion. Compassion is a true attempt to join with another and share his sufferings and so, at least partially, create a bridge over the individuating gulf. On the other hand, pity is not a "suffering with" but an "awareness of" another's suffering and a consciousness that one's self is not suffering in a similar way. Pity can therefore easily turn into a feeling of superiority and a distancing from the realm of the other's experience. Once superiority is assumed it is a short step before the rights to know and to judge are presumed also, and the deadly sin of pride can come to replace or hinder the growth of that trust in God which is, for Teilhard and Greene, such an essential part of the solution to man's problem. Conrad, to a certain extent, shares Scobie's failing in The Heart of the Matter, a need to lift oneself above the wretched world and look down upon it from a distance. "Scobie could always detect the odour of human meanness and injustice - it was the smell of a zoo, of sawdust, excrement, ammonia and lack of liberty."<sup>15</sup>

Another aspect of Teilhard's thought that is presented in It's a Battlefield is that of the individual whose concern lies solely with the material welfare of mankind, and so, in Teilhardian terms, whose goals lie outside the Christic evolutionary stream. The Assistant Commissioner has the same longing for worldly justice as we shall find in Ida Arnold in Brighton Rock, and in Scobie in The Heart of the Matter. The Commissioner longs for some "organization which would enlist his fidelity, because of its inherent justice, its fair distribution of reward, its reasonableness."<sup>16</sup>

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15 The Heart of the Matter, pl06.

16 It's a Battlefield, pl48.

This is a hopeless dream in the "fallen world", but one that some of Greene's characters hopelessly seek after, not realizing it is an existential impossibility to have perfect institutions and individuals in an imperfect world. The prison chaplain resigns, "sick of human justice;"<sup>17</sup> and Scobie will not only seek for it, he will attempt to bring it about by himself.

In It's a Battlefield Greene's interest lies more with presenting the situation of a world of misery and injustice. He examines the problem of evil and only briefly offers some solution. It is in The Power and the Glory, Brighton Rock, The Heart of the Matter, and The End of the Affair that Greene's emphasis lies more with presenting a possible solution.

The central issue in this novel is the nature of the world and man's condition in it. While there may temporarily exist states of right and justice in the world, the fundamental problem of evil for Teilhard and Greene lies much deeper than matters of "justice or injustice" or the "right and wrong" of Ida Arnold in Brighton Rock. They are concerned with man's ontological state rather than his physical and social condition. The basic problem is found in the obvious existence of evil and suffering in a world supposedly under the control of a "good" God. For both writers, God alone had effective influence over the world. Man can accomplish nothing by himself, and Greene's novels form the presentation of these ideas in fictional and dramatic form.

The responses of both the Commissioner and Conrad to the problem are inadequate. The Commissioner, aware of

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17 It's a Battlefield, p230.

injustices, but choosing to ignore them, salves his conscience and awareness with his sense of duty. "[He] like Pilate, washed his hands; justice is not my business; politics are not my business. God help the man responsible for the way that life is organized; I am only a paid servant, doing what I am told."<sup>18</sup> Notice that the "excuse" is the Commissioner's; the comment equating him with Pilate is Greene's authorial intervention. Like Pilate, the Commissioner may declare his innocence and deny responsibility; but like Pilate, he is completely involved and is as responsible for the misery in the world as every other man in it who fails to move properly into the Christic stream. (The Pilate figure is encountered again in the person of the lieutenant in Brighton Rock.)

While the Commissioner chooses to ignore the problem, Conrad, who "became aware with sudden clarity how injustice ... was as much a part of the body as age and inevitable disease,"<sup>19</sup> attempts to take revenge into his own hands; seeking, like Ida Arnold in Brighton Rock, and Scobie in The Heart of the Matter, and the lieutenant in The Power and the Glory, a worldly solution. Contrary to Teilhard's view that it is God and God alone who should "take his revenge, if one may use the expression,"<sup>20</sup> Conrad seeks to kill, in the person of the Commissioner, all who represent oppression and injustice.<sup>21</sup> As any purely materialistic attempt to solve the problem can only result in frustration and failure, in the doctrine of Teilhard and of Greene, Conrad is instead run over and ends his life in a hospital ward where twelve silent men, completely

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18 It's a Battlefield, p190.

19 ibid. p66.

20 Le Milieu Divin, p86.

21 It's a Battlefield, p224

uninterested, preside, like a symbol of human justice, over his death.

Thus, the Commissioner fails to find a solution to the problem of evil because of his hypocrisy; while Conrad fails through mistakenly seeing the problem in terms of "right and wrong" and attempting to take justice into his own hands.

For Teilhard and Greene, the problem is simply the existence of evil in the world as an intrinsic part of man's ontological and existential condition, and the solution lies only in the acceptance of, and trust in, God's greater knowledge and mercy.

Any love in the Teilhardian sense, "the power of love, the cosmic energy of the spirit...[without which] there can be no true union of human beings"<sup>22</sup> that could overcome man's "individuation and plurality", is missing from all the characters in It's a Battlefield.

Condor creates a facade of a loving family, disguising his isolation rather than moving to overcome it by reaching out beyond himself. Kay Rimmer is preoccupied with casual sex as even her name suggests. Surrogate also presents a hypocritical facade; his pity for the mouse is as false as his pity for Drover. When the mouse will not accept his offering of cheese, he orders a trap set for it. Greene shows all the characters essentially fighting "in the mist", seeing nothing outside their own selfish little circles of vision.

Greene does not (contrary to some critics' opinions) present a totally bleak picture. There is some glimmer of light in the darkness of the fallen world.

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22 A.V. Knight, op.cit. p98.

When the Chaplain resigns because of his lack of faith in human justice: "It's arbitrariness. It's incomprehensibility (sic)."<sup>23</sup> The Commissioner asks him: "...but isn't that very like, that is to say, isn't divine justice much the same?" To which the Chaplain replies: "Perhaps. But one can't hand in a resignation to God....And I have no complaint against His mercy."<sup>24</sup>

Here if anywhere in this novel is the solution of Teilhard and Greene. It is, in brief, the solution that Greene will develop and present even more fully in the other novels under consideration. The world of man is unjust and faulty and those who try to judge God by those standards, or who limit their efforts to a worldly improvement are necessarily frustrated by the material they must work with. Man can resign from the material world of "right and wrong", but not from his ontological state in a creation of good and evil. All man can do is trust in God's mercy and recognize his limited understanding. As Teilhard advises, the solution lies in faith in God's "making evil itself serve a higher good of his faithful...God transfigures them [evils] by integrating them in a better plan - provided we lovingly trust in him."<sup>25</sup>

It is precisely this central element of Teilhard's solution, trust in God's Grace, through faith, that will come to offer increasing hope in Greene's landscapes of struggle, isolation, injustice and evil.

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23 It's a Battlefield, p230. Note: In this edition the apostrophe was present in both "It's". I presume printing or typographical error.

24 ibid. p230.

25 Le Milieu Divin, p86.

### CHAPTER 3

#### BETWEEN THE STIRRUP AND THE GROUND: BRIGHTON ROCK

While Brighton Rock, like It's a Battlefield, has a strong concern with presenting the problem of the evil world, Greene extends that aspect of his thought that deals with the solution. Therefore, in this novel, the journey of Pinkie and Rose through the landscape of misery and corruption to a possible salvation through Grace is of prime importance.

The world remains a physically evil and depressing place. "The houses . . . looked as if they had passed through an intensive bombardment, flapping gutters and glassless windows, an iron bedstead rusting in a front garden, the smashed and wasted ground..."<sup>1</sup> However there is a greater concern in Brighton Rock with a world that is morally and spiritually corrupt as well. Hale sees the Bank Holiday crowd as it surges "like some natural and irrational migration of insects."<sup>2</sup> Pinkie has an even stronger vision of a world of lost innocence. "You had to go back a long way further before you got innocence; innocence was a slobbering mouth, a toothless gum pulling at the teats; perhaps not even that; innocence was the ugly cry of birth."<sup>3</sup> In a world where Pinkie can find no innocence it is not surprising that there is a growing impression of the world as a hellish place of damnation. Pinkie echoes Prewitt's description of the world as "Hell, nor are we out of it."

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1 G. Greene, Brighton Rock. London, Heinemann, 1968, p86.

2 (All future references refer to this edition).

2 ibid. p95.

3 ibid. p135.

As previously stated, Greene's presentations of an evil world are not ends-in-themselves but serve as a backdrop to the main issue, the mystery of God's mercy. Muller draws attention to the fact that this creates a problem for some readers. "Brighton Rock is passionately concerned with the defeat of good, the prevalence and intensity of sin, the widespread reign of evil. This vindication of evil in the form of Pinkie, a juvenile Satan, would seem to preclude the belief in a God who is unlimited both in goodness and in power...[but eventually] Greene justifies God by showing how the complete reversal of good can be sanctified by the limitless power of good — evoking the infinite goodness of Grace."<sup>4</sup>

Not only is the Teilhardian awareness of an evil world depicted, but the image of the battlefield, already discussed in relation to It's a Battlefield, also finds expression in this novel. Again, it is a battlefield on many levels, from the power struggles and gang rivalries between Colleoni's mob and Pinkie's, to the psychological and spiritual confrontations between the characters themselves.

Ida Arnold tries to dominate Rose in an effort to win her away from Pinkie's influence, but "the bony and determined face stared back at her: all the fight there was in the world lay there — warships cleared for action and bombing fleets took flight between the set eyes and the stubborn mouth. It was like the map of a campaign marked with flags."<sup>5</sup> Pinkie is very aware of life as a constant battle, he realized that "life was a series of complicated tactical exercises, as complicated as the alignments at Waterloo."<sup>6</sup> In the everyday struggle for

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4 C.H. Muller. "Graham Greene and the Justification of God's Ways." in UNISA 10: pp23-35, p23, p28.

5 Brighton Rock, p195.

6 ibid. p107.



survival there is seldom time to plan a whole campaign, to come to grips with the overall direction of our life, for, as Pinkie says: "tactics, tactics; there [is] never any time for strategy."<sup>7</sup>

It is in this "battle" that man's awareness of individuation and sense of abandonment emerge most strongly. Pinkie comes to realize the same human condition that Teilhard was referring to when he said: "We carry within us, as a continuous deep vibration of which our individual agonies and intoxications are passing harmonics, the dull gnawing pain of the individuation by which the separation of beings is maintained and their plurality persists."

This key concept of Teilhard's is readily seen in all Greene's protagonists and Pinkie is no exception. After haggling with Rose's parents about her "marriage price", Pinkie and Rose leave together, passing the children playing "among the ruins of Paradise Piece" and Pinkie becomes aware that "a dim desire for annihilation stretched in him: the vast superiority of vacancy."<sup>9</sup> The parallel between fallen mankind and the children among the ruins of Paradise Piece (Paradise Peace) is fairly obvious. Pinkie and Rose are little more than children themselves, but already they feel the overwhelming effects of fallen man's state.

Like Brigitta and Coral in The Power and the Glory, Pinkie is one of the "lost" or "doomed" children who have had their innocence snatched away from them by an evil world, while all that has replaced it has been the experience of that world of evil and misery. Pinkie is repeatedly presented in terms of

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7 Brighton Rock, p195.

8 H. de Lubac, op.cit. pp37-38.

9 Brighton Rock, p140.

this "lost child" image. "His grey eyes had an effect of heartlessness like an old man's in which human feeling has died."<sup>10</sup> Again, the reader is told that "the slatey eyes were touched with the annihilating eternity from which he had come and to which he went."<sup>11</sup>

Hale also experiences some sense of individuation, alone in the crowd, but his experience does not have the stark existential quality that Pinkie's has. This is exactly the reason that, unlike Rose and Pinkie, Ida is able to offer some comfort to Hale, for both her comfort and his sense of loneliness remain only on the superficial level. Her worldly love can overcome his worldly sense of loss. But no other character can overcome Pinkie's sense of absolute abandonment and isolation. Pinkie is symbolic of the state of fallen man and, as Muller points out (Muller, op.cit. p33) only God can repatriate the exiled one, for, as Teilhard stated: "all beings, even if they appear to be in contact, are separated by an unbridgeable abyss."<sup>12</sup> This problem has already been seen in relation to Conrad in It's a Battlefield and it is the same problem that must be faced by Bendrix in The End of the Affair and Scobie in The Heart of the Matter. Both Teilhard and Greene look beyond mere human relationships for the answer. Part of the solution lies in the fact of the Incarnation, but it is not until The Power and the Glory that Greene gives this aspect his fullest attention. There is a hint of Greene's awareness of it, however. When Ida is questioning Cubitt about Pinkie there is a rather vague image of Pinkie as a Christ figure being denied by Spicer as St Peter. "'You a friend of Pinkie's?' Ida Arnold asked. 'Christ, no,' Cubitt said and

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10 Brighton Rock, p4.

11 ibid, p17.

12 A.V. Knight, op.cit. p98.

took some more whisky. A vague memory of the Bible, where it lay in the cupboard next the Board, the Warwick Deeping 'Good Companions', stirred in Ida Arnold's memory. 'I've seen you with him,' she lied: a courtyard, a sewing [sic] wench beside the fire, the cock crowing."<sup>13</sup> It is important to note, however, that the comparison is in Ida's mind and not, as in the later work, presented by the authorial Greene. It should also be noted that by giving capital letters to all three objects in the cupboard, Ida has reduced the Bible to the level of the superstitious ouija board, and the sickly sentimentality of the "Good Companions." Greene, in Brighton Rock, is concerned with the "mysterious Grace" aspect of salvation rather than its Incarnation aspect and the Christ image is much more developed in The Power and the Glory.

The greatest concern in this novel is with examining two levels of human existence, those who, like Ida, attempt in Teilhard's terms to "regard the world as a dead end and the universe as a closed system,"<sup>14</sup> and who lack the "awareness of something within oneself,"<sup>15</sup> and others who have experienced the "expanding consciousness," the awareness of the "greater reality."

Ida Arnold represents the first type. Her relationships are all shallow and exist solely on the casual and superficial level. When Ida goes to the police station to investigate Hale's death, she blows into the police station "with a laugh to this man and a wave of the hand to that. She didn't know them from Adam."<sup>16</sup> Ida lacks recognition of "the power of

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13 Brighton Rock, p156. Note: in all editions I have examined the reference is to a 'sewing wench.' The scriptural original is serving wench. This alteration could be deliberate as an indication of Ida's shallow knowledge or a printing oversight.

14 A.V. Knight, op.cit. p93.

15 ibid. p83.

16 Brighton Rock, p72.

love, the cosmic energy of the spirit."<sup>17</sup> Instead, life for her is "camaraderie, good nature." Greene presents her shallowness thus: "cheeriness fell like shutters before a plate glass window. You could only guess at the good behind: sound old-fashioned, hall-marked goods, justice, an eye for an eye, law and order, capital punishment, a bit of fun now and then, nothing nasty, nothing shady, nothing you'd be ashamed to own, nothing mysterious."<sup>18</sup>

Ida's interpretation of the meaningless jumble of the ouija board's message is typical. She is not interested in the truth, simply in imposing her own sense of order on those aspects of the world she chooses to deal with. It is significant that while Ida can comfort Hale, she cannot save him and it is the most basic aspect of man, the animal need for excretion, that calls Ida away and so breaks her fragile link with Hale.

Greene is demonstrating the inadequacy and tenuousness of the human bond on the superficial worldly level. The bond between Rose and Pinkie offers a strong contrast; Rose would damn herself to save Pinkie, whereas Ida will not even postpone a trip to the toilet to save Hale. The vast distance between the two levels of existence of those who live in the realm of "right and wrong", and those who live in the ontological realm of "good and evil", becomes increasingly apparent in Greene's work.

The confrontation between the two worlds of experience is seen when Ida goes to "save" Rose from Pinkie. "'All you need is a bit of experience.' The Nelson Place eyes stared back at her without understanding: driven to her hole the small

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17 A.V. Knight, op.cit. p98.

18 Brighton Rock, p73.

animal peered out at the bright and breezy world: in the hole were murder, copulation, extreme poverty, fidelity, and the love and fear of God: but the small animal had not the knowledge to deny that only in the glare and open world outside was something which people called experience."<sup>19</sup> The contrast is continued in Ida's later visit. "'I know one thing you don't. I know the difference between Right and Wrong. They didn't teach you that at school.' Rose didn't answer; the woman was quite right; the two words meant nothing to her. Their taste was extinguished by stronger foods — Good and Evil."<sup>20</sup>

In contrast with Ida Arnold then, Pinkie and Rose are aware of the "greater reality." They talk of God, sin, salvation, but Pinkie has not yet been touched by Grace. He is aware of the ontological state of the world but has not yet been given the solution. "'Of course there's Hell. Flames and damnation...torments.' 'And Heaven too,' said Rose with anxiety. 'Oh, maybe,' the boy said, 'maybe.'" Because Rose and Pinkie represent, for Greene, man aware of his true state, it is to those two characters that Greene devotes most of his attention as he follows their paths to the possibility of salvation.

Muller sees Rose as Greene's symbol for God's Grace: "...the fact that Rose can continue to respect and value [Pinkie] justifies her goodness, and the divine Grace of which her goodness is symbolic... Pinkie's evil is a sickness, a perversion of the natural, and Rose represents the divine Grace that is able to heal, or to save."<sup>21</sup> He comments further:

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19 Brighton Rock, p119.

20 ibid. p195.

21 C.H. Muller, op.cit. p29.

"Pinkie's 'sense of needing' Rose is the sinner's love for God that is based on his own need for Grace, whereas Rose's love is the Gift-love (Grace) that longs to serve, or even suffer for, another."<sup>22</sup> Because of this, Muller continues: "Do what he may, Pinkie cannot escape Rose's love; her love is the divine love that actively operates in pursuing the sinner, even though it may increase his torment."<sup>23</sup>

Such identifications must be carefully considered. If Rose was presented as a character strong and persistent in her own faith, there would be a stronger basis for this Rose/Grace identification. However Greene clearly shows the reader that Rose seems to fall away from Grace herself and fail in her belief. I believe that Greene is using Pinkie to present a character who seems doomed since birth, because of the environmental and moral passivities of his upbringing, to ultimate damnation. In Rose we have a character who seems at one stage to be innocent enough to be saved, but who, under Pinkie's influence, seems to be dragged with him down the road to damnation. Rather than Rose's representing Grace, both characters represent aspects of the human condition and Greene can use *both* characters to present the mystery of God's Grace in action.

Despite her upbringing amidst the corruption of Nelson Place, Rose appears first as an innocent, but by co-operating in the Registry office marriage with Pinkie, she sees herself as a sinner, begins to judge in human terms, and believes she is damning herself. She had intended to go to confession before the wedding, but as she intends to commit a mortal sin, she does not go. Again, the morning after the wedding, she was

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22 C.H. Muller op.cit.p29.

23 ibid. p33.

about to pray, but thought: "What was the good of praying now? She'd finished with all that: she had chosen her side: if they damned him they'd got to damn her too."<sup>24</sup> On Sunday morning, the church bells remind her of "freedom from the silent prayers at the altar, from the awful demands made on you at the sanctuary rail. She had joined the other side now for ever...she was having her cake in this world, not in the next, and she didn't care. She was stamped with him, as his voice was stamped on the vulcanite."<sup>25</sup> Later she tries to pray. "'Holy Mary, Mother of God' but then she stopped — she was in mortal sin: it was no good praying. Her prayers stayed here below with the siphons and the statuettes: they had no wings."<sup>26</sup> Pinkie will have the same sensation of being unable to reach God of his own efforts, as will other characters in Greene's novels.

Far from being a symbol of Grace, therefore, I believe Rose is struggling to find salvation just as much as Pinkie is, and the reader must be wary of accepting too readily, what is presented through her eyes. As will be seen in the other works, Greene's characters' insight is not always reliable or true. For instance, Rose has envisioned herself as "stamped" with Pinkie as much as the black vulcanite is stamped with his voice. However, what Rose believes is stamped on the vulcanite is not so, as the reader already knows. Therefore Greene is warning the reader not to believe always what the characters, with their limited vision, claim or believe. Another example of this is found at the end of the book when the priest has offered Rose the hope of Pinkie's salvation. "If he loved you, that shows..." The reader knows the

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24 Brighton Rock, p185.

25 ibid. pp190-191.

26 ibid. p226.

message on the record is not one of love, but of hatred. The worry over Pinkie's damnation as a result of this factor will be, for Rose, "the worst horror of all." But that is because she will continue to *judge* salvation. Greene has already given the reader the answer, the same solution he gives in the other works. "'You can't conceive...nor can I or anyone — the appalling strangeness of the mercy of God.'"<sup>27</sup>

Pinkie is the other character Greene uses to demonstrate this message. Pinkie has a theoretical awareness of the possibility of last minute salvation through God's mercy. However while aware of the "between the stirrup and the ground" possibility, his pride prevents him from making it a practical awareness, and he constantly rejects the possibility for himself. His rejection of the message of hope is a constant refrain throughout the book. "He even tried to pray. You could be saved between the stirrup and the ground, but you couldn't be saved if you didn't repent and he hadn't time... to feel the least remorse." This is the same pride that prevents Scobie and Padre José from relying on God's mercy, that causes a character to view himself as too great a sinner for God to have either the desire or power to save.

Despite Muller's opinion that Rose acts, in Greene's work, as the instrument of Grace for Pinkie, I agree with his analysis of the basic concept of Grace as he finds it presented in Brighton Rock. He believes that Grace must always move as a gift from God to man, not as a right able to be demanded from God. Muller finds in the Pauline theology of "Katallago ", or "reconciliation ", a basis for Greene's presentation of the working of Grace as a "pursuit" of the

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27 Brighton Rock, p242.



character: "...in this reconciliation between God and man, it is God who is the reconciler: in Christianity God is always the subject, and man the object; it is God who takes the initiative, and man is the object, the reconciled. This is, in fact, the substance of Greene's treatment of Grace; and his conflicts between good and evil are resolved on this basis."<sup>28</sup>

Pinkie has been baptized and does have some concept of the mercy of God, but, as mentioned already, he cannot make this concept a personally meaningful one. It begins simply as a half remembered rhyme when "...memory floated up imperfectly into speech. 'You know what they say — "Between the stirrup and the ground, he something sought and something found."'

'Mercy.'

'That's right: Mercy'"<sup>29</sup>

Pinkie has an awareness of the "greater reality" but his vision of it is confused, a jumble of superstitious images from childhood and his own dark imaginings that allow him to picture Heaven and Hell in terms of "flames," "the gates," "a glassy sea, a golden crown." It is the vision of Hell that dominates his thoughts of the "Beyond ", however.

He has an awareness that he is not completely in control, the same feeling that Bendrix will notice in The End of the Affair. While he may wish to organize life for himself and others, he must constantly face the fact that "it was as if he were being driven too far down a road he only wanted to travel a certain distance."<sup>30</sup> He realizes the possibility that "you could lose vice as easily as you lost virtue,

28 C.H. Muller op.cit.p33.

29 Brighton Rock, p87.

30 ibid. p125.

going out of you from a touch."<sup>31</sup> It seems to him as if something beyond himself has taken over, "not a single false step, but every step conditioned by a pressure he couldn't even place... He thought: When I've married the girl, will it stop then? Where else can it drive me?"<sup>32</sup> He realizes finally that he must simply resign himself to it. "More than ever yet he had the sense that he was being driven further and deeper than he'd ever meant to go...he didn't really care so very much — it was being decided for him, and all he had to do was to let himself easily go."<sup>33</sup> Greene is presenting the reader with the object of reconciliation; no matter where and how Pinkie might seek to escape he is constantly aware of the presiding influence of something greater than himself.

One of Pinkie's reactions is a constantly reiterated plea for peace. Scobie in The Heart of the Matter will have a similar longing and make the same mistake. Pinkie's cry is "Dona nobis pacem." However this is part of a threefold liturgical formula from the Catholic Mass, "Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis. Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis. Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem." Pinkie is calling for peace, but without first making the plea for mercy that is a necessary prerequisite. Without the essential aspect of self-abasement and acknowledgement of God's power and mercy implicit in the "miserere nobis ", Pinkie cannot find the peace he seeks. "The words 'Dona nobis pacem' came again to mind; for the second time he felt a faint nostalgia, as if for something he had lost or forgotten or rejected."<sup>34</sup> It is precisely the fact that he cannot attain the true peace he seeks that leads him later

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31 Brighton Rock, pl33.

32 *ibid.* pl43.

33 *ibid.* p203.

34 *ibid.* pl16

to try to arrange it for himself, refusing to leave it to God any more. "If people would leave me in peace... His imagination wilted at the word. He tried in a half-hearted way to picture 'peace' — his eyes closed and behind the lids he saw a grey darkness going on and on without end, a country of which he hadn't seen as much as a picture post card, a place far stranger than the Grand Canyon and Taj Mahal."<sup>35</sup>

In his view of life, Pinkie initially shares Prewitt's view that "given time...anything can be arranged" and attempts to "arrange" peace for himself or else to reject peace in the belief that he has damned himself. He again shares Scobie's and Padre José's fault of judging, from human standards, the mystery of God's mercy. Any insight that could be offered by the concept of mercy found "between the stirrup and the ground" is rejected by his limited and faulty human judgement. "He thought: there'll be time enough in the years ahead to repent of this...Even if death came suddenly...there was still 'between the stirrup and the ground'... He wasn't really deceiving himself — he'd learnt the other day that when the time was short there were other things than contrition to think about. It didn't matter anyway...he wasn't made for peace, he couldn't believe in it. Heaven was a word: hell was something he could trust."<sup>36</sup> "'Between the stirrup and the ground' — he had learnt the fallacy of that comfort...She was good, he'd discovered that, and he was damned."<sup>37</sup>

As did Rose, Pinkie feels his inability to reach God from his own efforts. "He felt constriction and saw — hopelessly out of reach — a limitless freedom: no fear, no hatred, no envy...he couldn't experience contrition — the ribs of his body were like steel bands which held him down to eternal

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35 - Brighton Rock, pl46.

36 *ibid.* p223.

37 *ibid.* pl22.

unrepentance."<sup>38</sup> It is Pinkie, in his refusal to humble himself before God, in his constant application of mere human standards of judgement to God, who closes himself off from the effects of God's Grace.

Yet there is an obvious ambivalence in his attitude. He may proudly protest his lack of concern over his damnation and his rejection of the Church and of Grace, yet Greene makes the reader aware that there is more hope for Pinkie than Pinkie would allow himself. At times Pinkie can experience "a faint nostalgia for the tiny dark confessional...to be made safe from eternal pain."<sup>39</sup> Even when brought face to face with the reality of God's Grace at work in what seems, by human standards, the most unlikely and unappealing situations, as in the old woman, Pinkie cannot extend the possibility to include himself. "He could just see the rotting and discoloured face: it was like the sight of damnation. Then he heard the whisper: 'Blessed art thou among women,' saw the grey fingers fumbling at the beads. This was not one of the damned: he watched with horrified fascination: this was one of the saved."<sup>40</sup>

Pinkie's motivation in refusing a Church wedding is unclear. Nevertheless, Greene has a purpose, I believe, in having him refuse it. If Pinkie refused the Church service because he wanted to get out of the marriage later, then some attachment to the Church is indicated. In Catholic canon law, a marriage outside the Church can be annulled and the Catholic may be able to marry again. However, in view of Pinkie's attitude towards sex and marriage, this seems an unlikely explanation.

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38 Brighton Rock, p175.

39 ibid. pp104-5.

40 ibid. p184.

The second possibility is that his deep but suppressed belief will not allow him to sacrilegiously receive a sacrament, marriage, because of the unworthy motives that have driven him to the match and of which he is clearly aware. He marries Rose reluctantly and selfishly, simply to protect himself legally. Again, in view of Pinkie's own experience of his parents' marriage and their "Saturday night exercise," such a sensitivity to the spiritual aspect of the marriage sacrament seems unlikely.

I am led to a third explanation, and one which is found less in the character of Pinkie himself, than in the belief of Greene and in his message of Grace. Marriage, as a sacrament, is a source of Grace and Pinkie has rejected Grace. Greene, in this novel, presents the reader with God's free gift of "sanctifying Grace" rather than the "sacramental Grace" that is more fully examined in The Power and the Glory. I believe it is possible therefore that Pinkie's rejection of the Church wedding is more a matter of authorial control in the interest of a consistent presentation of Pinkie's attempt to reject Grace throughout the novel, than a natural reaction stemming from Pinkie's own personality.

Despite Pinkie's rejection of Grace however, the solution Greene offers the reader is that same Teilhardian solution that is found in all the novels selected, the mysterious incomprehensibility of God's mercy.

Before his death Pinkie is forced to acknowledge his awareness of it. "An enormous emotion beat on him: it was like something trying to get in; the pressure of gigantic wings against the glass. Dona nobis pacem. He withstood it ... If the glass broke, if the beast — whatever it was — got in, God knows what it would do. He had a sense of huge

havoc — the confusion, the penance and the sacrament."<sup>41</sup>

It is, as usual, the priest figure who offers the solution.

"You can't conceive, my child, nor can I or anyone — the ...appalling...strangeness of the mercy of God."<sup>42</sup>

Therefore, in Brighton Rock, Greene has presented all the main elements of Teilhard's doctrine. The reader confronts the evil world of fallen man, where man has two possibilities. He may stay outside the Christic evolutionary stream and seek a solution in material happiness, as Ida does. Or he may immerse himself in the "greater reality" with all the struggle that implies. The hope and solution is found in faith and in a trust in a mysterious and free God who alone can draw man to Himself.

Ida's view of man is not Teilhard's or Greene's. Ida comments: "It's like those sticks of rock: bite it all the way down, you'll still read Brighton. That's human nature."<sup>43</sup> But man is more than he appears on the surface, just as the world is. However, Ida lacks the perception to see this and so she, no matter how closely she studies human nature, can only see the surface pattern of human "justice" and "judgement" and "fun." Greene and Teilhard offer another dimension, the ontological fact of good and evil, of man's place in creation and God's place in salvation. It is these elements that Greene continues to investigate in The Power and the Glory.

41 Brighton Rock, p234.

42 ibid. p242.

43 ibid. p194.

#### CHAPTER 4

#### THE CHRISTIC CENTRE: "THE POWER AND THE GLORY"

The function of the whisky priest in The Power and the Glory has been a point of controversy for various of Greene's critics. Opinions vary from those who see the priest simply as an individual human being struggling with fear and despair, to those who see the priest in a more symbolic aspect. Kunkel, for example, sees the transformation of Tobasco into the whole wasteland of Original Sin, with the priest as symbol of the human soul, and his flight from the police as the soul's flight from God.<sup>1</sup> Brock and Welsh attribute even greater significance to the priest figure, seeing in the analogy between the priest and Christ the "way in which the priest's experiences mirror the mystery of Christ's selfless Incarnation."<sup>2</sup>

It is my contention that Greene has given the priest <sup>even</sup> character an/more profound role in the presentation of his beliefs. I believe that Greene, in The Power and the Glory, presents the reader with his fullest expression of the mystery of the Incarnation, but in a way that other critics may have overlooked. Greene shares, with Péguy and Teilhard, that vision of the Incarnation as the central aspect of salvation.<sup>3</sup> It is through Christ's Incarnation in time and still present carrying mankind forward in "the unity of divinity and humanity...assuming the leadership of what we now call

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1 F.L. Kunkel, op.cit. p

2 D.H. Brock & J.M. Welsh, "Grahame Greene and the structure of salvation" in Renaissance 27:p36.

3 R. Hague op.cit. (no pagination)

evolution;"<sup>4</sup> that man is offered his only escape from the fallen world.

As in Greene's other works, the fallen world is presented constantly in terms of bleakness and decay. "The blazing Mexican sun and the bleaching dust. A few vultures looked down from the roof with shabby indifference."<sup>5</sup> It is not only nature, but also the man-made environment that moulders bleakly. The "General Obregon" had "a few feet of damaged rail, one lifeboat, a bell hanging on a rotten cord."<sup>6</sup> The priest has experienced the problem of evil and admits it to Tench after the latter has confided in him the story of his broken marriage: "'It is awful....I mean the world. The way things happen.'" However the priest is also aware of the solution: "'They had at any rate - God.'" Tench, on the other hand, is one who seems to close himself off from the Christic evolution. Through lack of perception and pre-occupation with the material world, he remains a denizen of the misty battlefield unable to see beyond his own petty concerns. For him the oppressive anti-Catholic regime has brought no change. "'There's no difference in the teeth.'"

The priest is more than the mouthpiece Greene uses to state the problem and solution. He has an even more vital role in Greene's presentation; for Greene has united, in the character of the priest, an intricate and profound expression of two interconnecting aspects of Catholic belief, the theology of the Incarnation, and the theology of the priesthood. The priest does not simply give utterance to these doctrines, but embodies them and manifests them in his own person

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4 A.V. Knight. op.cit. p133.

5 G. Greene. The Power and the Glory, Penguin, 1972, p7.  
(All future references to this novel refer to this edition).

6 ibid. p8.



and actions.

Brock and Welsh claim that "one may easily exaggerate the priest's significance as a Christ figure" but they also acknowledge that "the analogy carries greater significance than the rather obvious parallels between the life of the priest and that of Christ."<sup>7</sup> To properly appreciate the profundity of Greene's presentation it is necessary to consider both these aspects of the priest's role in the book.

The first consideration when dealing with the priest/Christ parallel is a brief discussion on the main elements of the Catholic theology of the priesthood. In this theology, the priest is seen as an "alter Christus" who, at mass, recreates the event and sacrifice of Calvary. As this event brought about the atonement between fallen man and God, first made possible by the Incarnation and ultimately fulfilled in the Resurrection, so, by his power to re-enact that atonement, the priest is the sacramental link between God and man in a fallen world. The priesthood, therefore, is the most important vehicle for Christ's continuing sacramental presence in the world. While by the very fact he is both man and "alter Christus", the priest is also a constant reminder of the ongoing fact of the Incarnation.

Greene presents a consistent and developing parallel between the events that happen in The Power and the Glory and the events in Christ's final road to Calvary. The priest's journey to death is as inevitable as Christ's and marked by similar incidents.

Having accepted the call of "duty" instead of escape, the priest leaves Tench's office to give the last rites to the

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7 D.H. Brock & J.M. Welsh. op.cit. p36.

"sick" woman. Tench, ignorant that he is a priest, comments: "You do no good," but the priest's reply lifts Tench's statement, and his own response, to the level of the problem of evil-Mankind crying out in the darkness, seeking an answer to the problem of a "good" God in an evil universe. It is as Christ rather than as individual priest that he replies: "I can hear them saying it all over the world." He is then led off on a donkey, as Christ began His journey to death in Jerusalem.

Like Christ in Gethsemane, asking that the chalice be taken away, the priest longs for a reprieve from his suffering: "'Let me be caught soon....Let me be caught.' He had tried to escape, but he was like the King of a West African tribe, the slave of his people, who may not even lie down in case the winds should fail."<sup>8</sup> In the prophetic literature of the Old Testament, Christ, the Messiah, is presented in terms of the "Servant", and another title of the Catholic priest is "servus servorum Dei", servant of the servants of God. Here is the link Greene is presenting through the "servant" concept, between the priest and Christ. Greene reinforces the image when the priest, later in the book, arrives, desperately tired and resentful, at the village. In response to the villagers' demands for confessions and mass, he says: "'Oh let them come. Let them all come....I am your servant.'"<sup>9</sup>

In the presentation of the priest in contrast with the robber, James Calver, a parallel may be seen with Christ and Barabbas. In the lieutenant's office, the pictures of the priest and Calver are pinned up side by side. In view of the

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<sup>8</sup> The Power and the Glory, p19.

<sup>9</sup> ibid. p45.

lieutenant's role as Pilate (about which, more later) faced with a choice of condemning the priest or the robber, "I am looking for two men - one is a gringo, a Yankee, a murderer ...the other is a priest", the parallel is very strong. Greene makes it even clearer by having a "halo" put around the priest's head in the photo. "Somebody had put a ring around his face to pick it out. There was another picture on the wall too - the gringo...wanted for murder and bank robbery."<sup>10</sup> Calver, his portrait hung beside that of the priest, seems later when dying to take on the role of the good/bad thief on Calvary as the priest/Christ seeks to comfort him.

Greene's use of symbolic character is not inconsistent but it can be ingenious and complex at times. Having noted Greene's presentation so far of the priest/Christ parallel, it is appropriate at this point to consider its treatment in the character of Padre José. It is Padre José's awareness of sinfulness that drives him to the borders of despair. He believes that, more than ordinary men, he is an affront to God, both in his unworthiness as a sacramental agent and in his role as an "alter Christus". "That was what made him worthy of damnation - the power he still had of turning the wafer into the flesh and blood of God. He was a sacrilege. [Note: "he was a sacrilege", not "he committed a sacrilege." ] Wherever he went, whatever he did, he defiled God."<sup>11</sup> Christ is present in the priesthood itself, not dependent on the quality of its agents. Greene is consistent in his presentation of the priest as sacramental agent of God's Grace and earthly symbol of His Incarnation in time.

10 The Power and the Glory, p121.

11 ibid. p59.

This Incarnation aspect of the priest's role is seen again when the priest returns to the village where he had fathered Brigitta, and becomes aware that he had taken on the depths of human experience, like Christ descending to take humanity upon Himself. "Nobody came forward to kiss his hand and ask his blessing. It was as if he had descended by means of his sin into the human struggle to learn other things besides despair and love, that a man can be unwelcome even in his own home."<sup>12</sup>

The parallel continues as the priest prophesies his freedom and peace: "In three days I shall be in Las Casas." In three days he will be dead. But another priest will have "arisen" to take his place, and by his death, the whisky priest will have "redeemed" Luis from the snares of the evil world. Christ prophesied before Calvary that in three days he would rise again and that Resurrection was the redeeming event that marked his return to the world of life. This point is related to another aspect of the theology of the priesthood. In Catholic theology, the priesthood is an organic whole; it is the shared priesthood that is important, not the individual human on whom it falls. Christ sanctifies the priesthood irrespective of the merits and failings of the individuals through whom it is exercised. The efficacy of the sacraments, and by extension, of all God's power, lies in the sacrament itself and not in the intermediary agent. With this in mind, it can be seen that the death of one priest/Christ followed by the appearance of another priest/Christ is a parallel with Christ's death and Resurrection. Greene underlines this point by never naming the true priest in any personal sense; both

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12 The Power and the Glory, p62.

the whisky priest and his successor are simply "the priest" or "Father".

Padre José cannot accept this concept. He therefore refuses to exercise his priesthood because of his feeling of unworthiness. He can see only the person, and not the organic priesthood and consequently he is the only priest whom Greene names personally. In contrast, the whisky priest utters Greene's belief. "But it doesn't matter so much my being a coward - and all the rest. I can put God into a man's mouth just the same....It wouldn't make any difference to that if every priest in the Church was like me."<sup>13</sup>

The whisky priest does sometimes lose this vision and put too much emphasis on his own performance as judged by human and worldly standards of visible success. "If I hadn't been so useless....If I had only one soul to offer, so that I could say, look what I've done."<sup>14</sup> Greene shows the reader that this view is faulty, for by his death and example the whisky priest has redeemed at least one soul, the soul of Luis, of whose existence he was scarcely aware. In welcoming the new unnamed priest, Luis also suggests the possibility that God, through the whisky priest, has saved the other children, Coral and Brigitta, despite the priest's fear that they were damned.

As already mentioned, Greene reinforces the presentation of the priest/Christ parallel by making use of an associated parallel between the lieutenant and Pontius Pilate. Besides the lieutenant's concern with bringing the two figures, the robber and the priest, to justice, he questions the priest about his beliefs and identity and washes his own hands of any

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<sup>13</sup> The Power and the Glory, p195.

<sup>14</sup> ibid. p208.

personal animosity or guilt about the priest's death. "You're a danger. That's why we kill you. I have nothing against you, you understand, as a man."<sup>15</sup>

So far, I have been concerned mainly with Greene's presentation of the priest/Christ parallel and related it to the Incarnation concept found in the theology of the priesthood, wherein the priest is both the vehicle for Christ's continuing sacramental presence in the world and, as "alter Christus" and "servus servorum", a symbol of His Incarnation in time. Greene is more profound than this, however; for the whisky priest in The Power and the Glory takes on even more significance in Greene's presentation of the Incarnation as Greene creates further parallels besides that with Christ. This is an aspect that critics seem to have neglected so far.

When the whisky priest is travelling with the mestizo (a clear Judas figure who serves, like the lieutenant/Pilate figure to reinforce the priest/Christ parallel), the priest in fact shifts into the role of Peter, denying Christ three times before cockcrow. He denies his priesthood, his "alter Christus" aspect, and so is denying Christ. The whisky priest has thus become a complex Christ and Peter image. In response to the mestizo's first accusation: "'Won't you say a prayer, father, before we sleep?'" the priest replies: "'Why do you call me that?...You're wrong.'"<sup>16</sup> In response to the second: "'What's that paper...father?'" he answers: "'Don't call me father.'" <sup>17</sup> With the third: "'What's preventing you father? You are a father aren't you?'" he answers: "'I have a child...if that's what you mean.'" <sup>18</sup> And shortly afterwards, "Somewhere a long way off a cock crew." The priest now admits his priesthood after the

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15 The Power and the Glory, p193.

16 ibid. p90.

17 ibid. p92.

18 ibid. p98.

three denials. "A voice said 'You are the priest, aren't you?' 'Yes.'"<sup>19</sup>

This shift in role is important, and it is not the only one, for the priest later becomes a type of Judas figure himself. When staying with the Lehrs, he slips into his old ways and haggles over the cost of the sacraments, in a way betraying his "alter Christus" for silver.

I believe these shifts in role are most important for Greene's message. He has presented Christ as Incarnate in and through the figure of the priest; yet this priest is not only a struggling fallible and faulty human being, he is Peter, afraid to acknowledge his faith, and Judas who betrays it. Here, for Greene, is the mystery of the Incarnation, that Christ is Incarnate in mankind as a whole and in every individual, no matter how sinful he may appear. Greene is presenting Teilhard's emphasis on the universal Incarnate presence of God as a result of which "all beings are ontologically suspended from Christ and have no meaning apart from him."<sup>20</sup>

It is at this point that I consider the application of the theology of the Incarnation, as presented in the novel. The theology of the priesthood has enabled the reader to see one aspect of Greene's presentation. The theology of the Incarnation offers another.

Not only is the Incarnate Christ sacramentally and symbolically present through the priesthood, but He is ontologically present in all mankind as a result of the historical fact of the Incarnation in space and time. He has entered into the "evolutionary stream" in Teilhard's sense of the

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<sup>19</sup> The Power and the Glory, pl00.

<sup>20</sup> A.V. Knight, op.cit.pl33.

term, and given it a new impulse and sustaining power. As a result of this, He is present in all men, good or evil, believers or unbelievers; and because of His presence, the possibility of salvation is now open to, and within, all men. Because of this Christic presence it is impossible to judge the salvation of another, for to do so would be to attempt to limit and judge God Himself. This is a key element in the thought of Teilhard and Greene, man cannot comprehend or judge the mystery of God's mercy.

The whisky priest expresses this concept of the Incarnation both in the prison cell and shortly afterwards in the ruined church. Greene has not lightly chosen such settings for the priest's moments of insight. Even in facing what seems the worst of mankind as in the prison, and at a moment when faith seems to have been toppled into decay like the ruined church, the priest cannot escape the reality of the mystery, "the convincing mystery - that we were made in God's image. God was the parent, but He was also the policeman, the criminal, the priest, the maniac and the judge. Something resembling God dangled from the gibbet or went into odd attitudes before the bullets in a prison yard or contorted itself like a camel in the attitude of sex...and God's image shook now up and down on the mule's back."<sup>21</sup> In the church, he ponders: "It was odd - this fury to deface, because, of course, you could never deface enough. If God had been like a toad, you could have rid the world of toads, but when God was like yourself, it was no good being content with stone figures - you had to kill yourself among the graves."<sup>22</sup>

When this presentation is linked with the priest as

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21 The Power and the Glory, p101.

22 ibid. p102.



Christ/Peter/Judas figure, there is a very powerful picture built up of the all-pervasive presence of God in the world through the Incarnate Christ.

Having given my interpretation of the significance of Greene's Incarnation presentation, and in particular his motives that lie behind the priest's vision of God-in-man (quoted above), I am unable to continue without commenting briefly on two contrary opinions.

Marković claims that the whisky priest "betrays man by trying to keep him in ignorance, superstition, and misery as a pledge of faith in God. The author on his part betrays his God. He makes him accept indiscriminately all the good and all the evil in the world and so turns him into a kind of scapegoat responsible for everything."<sup>23</sup> Far from Greene's blaming God for evil, Greene is offering God as the solution to the problem of evil. When one is aware of God's active presence in the world, no matter how evil and miserable man's superficial judgement may deem the world, it is God's very immanent presence that offers hope of lifting the world up, of bringing man to salvation through God's mercy. This, as I hope to demonstrate, is Greene's main point.

Turnell also seems to miss the point. He claims that the priest's vision in gaol shows Greene's reflections being put into the priest's mouth, especially Greene's poor view of human nature. He claims that Greene is in fact gloating over the disreputable behaviour of human nature and sneering at it when he uses "God's image" in association with discreditable images.<sup>24</sup> Little comment is needed. Greene's work, in the five books selected, is to express a unified, consistent and positive

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<sup>23</sup> V.E. Marković, op.cit. pp279-80.

<sup>24</sup> M. Turnell, op.cit. p26.

solution for man in an evil world. The mystery of God's Incarnate presence in the sinful world is an essential element in that solution, and not the dirty and possibly blasphemous snigger that Turnell would seem to believe.

The fallen world and the importance of the Incarnation are not the only Teilhardian concepts that find expression in The Power and the Glory. The sense of individuation and abandonment, the need for trust and the mystery of God's power and mercy, are found here as in the other works dealt with. For, God's Incarnate presence alone is not enough to provide a solution, it is only a part of it. Even the Incarnate Christ on the cross was compelled to cry out "Eli. Eli. Lama Sabac-thani?" - "My God. My God. Why have You deserted me?"

The answer for Teilhard and Greene is clear. Only a humble trust and faith in God can override all human guilts, doubts and fears to provide an answer. Despite the whisky priest's own doubts, it remains his constant message. "He was a man who was supposed to save souls. It had seemed quite simple once...now it was a mystery. He was aware of his own desperate inadequacy."<sup>25</sup> While he is overtly stating the impossibility of achieving his own salvation, there is a tacit underlying recognition of the need for God's Grace, without which he cannot rise above his ordinary human restrictions. "Why should anyone listen to his prayers? Sin was a constriction that prevented their escape."<sup>26</sup> The point is clear, man is a sinful being who can therefore not rise, of himself, to find salvation in a sinful world.

As trust in God is the only solution, so too, we are warned against the futility of trying to judge another's

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25 The Power and the Glory, p82.

26 ibid. p151

salvation. When the priest is waiting for Calver to repent and confess, "the priest sat hopelessly at the man's side; nothing would shift that violent brain towards peace....A Christian could believe that the soul...held absolution and peace at the final moment after a lifetime of the most hideous crime: or...what had seemed a good life went out with the permanent stamp of impurity."<sup>27</sup> Remember, these are the priest's thoughts, not Greene's. It is the priest who is struggling to come to an acceptance of the fact that man must not, and cannot, judge God's strange mercy.

The very fact that the whisky priest's judgement is faulty is made clear for the reader by Greene himself. For while the priest dies, feeling "only an immense disappointment because he had to go to God empty handed, with nothing done at all"<sup>28</sup>, the reader is aware that he has been the instrument of at least Luis' salvation, and possibly of others as well. Thus Greene gives the reader a clear lesson on the impossibility of judging "the appalling strangeness of the mercy of God", although this aspect is treated much more fully in The Heart of the Matter, The End of the Affair and, as already seen, in Brighton Rock.

As in Brighton Rock, we have in The Power and the Glory, one of those characters who in Teilhardian terms, regards "the world as a dead end and the universe as a closed system."<sup>29</sup> Like Ida Arnold, the lieutenant sees no more than the material possibilities and so is doomed to failure, despite his subjectively good intent. "What has God ever done for you? Have you got enough to eat? Have your children got enough to eat?" .... "I want to give you' - he made a gesture with his hands -

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27 The Power and the Glory, p190.

28 ibid. p210.

29 A.V. Knight, op.cit. p93.

'everything.'"...."I wanted to give them the whole world.'"

He fails to see the need of the common people for some pageantry, some tangible expression of hope, to relieve the greyness of their everyday lives.

There are many other aspects that could be considered, but as my concern lies chiefly in examining the novel with reference to Teilhard's ideas, and as I regard this novel as being primarily concerned with presenting the mystery of the Incarnation and its place in Teilhard's and Greene's scheme of salvation, I must move on to the examination of The Heart of the Matter.

As stated, I do find in The Power and the Glory a fictional expression of all Teilhard's main concerns: the sinful world, the need for trust in God, the mystery of His Grace, and especially the fact and effect of the Incarnation. However, it is also my opinion that this is the most theological, symbolic and complex of the works I have selected. Greene gives evidence of deep consideration of various points of Catholic practice and theology, and makes use of a carefully controlled manipulation of setting, character and action to present us with a world-view and a solution, that can best be understood in terms of the Teilhardian view of world and salvation.

## CHAPTER 5

### TRUST AND HUMILITY: "THE HEART OF THE MATTER"

Of all Greene's novels, this is the one that seems to have given rise to the most controversy amongst critics of Greene's works. In particular, Scobie's voluntary damnation and his self identification with the event of Calvary seem to have caused the most confusion, with reaction varying from accusations of heresy, to praise for Greene's defence of the individual as opposed to the dogmatism and inhumanity of Catholic theology and law.

As is the case with the novels already discussed, I believe that an interpretation of The Heart of the Matter must take into account the main elements in Greene's doctrine. The problem of evil is not Greene's *prime* concern; it stands only as a means of highlighting the "mystery" of the solution, God's Grace. Therefore, those critics who spend such a great deal of time debating whether Scobie has or has not damned himself have, I believe, missed the point. Scobie serves as Greene's study of one method of coping with the problem of evil; in Teilhard's terms, he is one who takes upon himself "only organization imposed from outside."<sup>1</sup> The whisky priest in The Power and the Glory embodies another method, the one Teilhard and Greene both favour, viz. a humble trust in God (a solution I find most fully developed and presented in the person of Sarah in The End of the Affair.)

In The Heart of the Matter Greene is again presenting

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1 A.V. Knight, op.cit. p98.

the reader with the idea that salvation lies primarily in the hands of God and not in the actions of man. In Brighton Rock and The Power and the Glory, Greene has, in the persons of Ida Arnold and the lieutenant, characters who "regard the world as a dead-end and the universe as a closed system,"<sup>2</sup> and therefore are outside the true evolutionary stream of man. In Scobie, Greene presents a different reaction. He is one of those of whom Teilhard says: "they often think they are honouring Christianity when they reduce it to a sort of gentle humanitarianism."<sup>3</sup> Whereas Ida Arnold and the Lieutenant are concerned with the happiness of their fellow man on a materialistic level, Scobie wants for Louise and Helen psychological and even spiritual happiness. His fault would therefore seem the greater as he attempts, of his own effort, to perfect not merely the material world but the moral and spiritual world. Like Ida, he cannot bring himself to trust God to deal with the problems of either domain.

I have already commented on Jones's thesis that by associating Scobie's action, i.e. voluntary damnation, with that of Péguy in the priest's story to Rose, Greene has "forged for himself a heroic legend of Péguy the renegade;"<sup>4</sup> and I have expressed my opinion that this view gives too little emphasis to Greene's main concern, the mystery of God's mercy. However there are some other points Jones makes that I will comment on in the light of the Teilhardian concepts Greene shares.

Jones states that: "It was pity then that dictated the

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2 A.V. Knight, op.cit. p83.

3 ibid. p98.

4 G.C. Jones, op.cit. pl39.

desperate action by which Scobie provoked his own damnation just as it was the same emotion that dictated so many of his other actions and attitudes....Cannot pity be seen as the great motivating force of Péguy's revolt against God in the name of the damned...we find there is something decidedly unhealthy about the pity Scobie feels. It thrives on ugliness."<sup>5</sup> Jones also concedes that: "there is an element of pride in Scobie's pity." However, I think pride is more than "an element" in Scobie's pity; it is the foundation and sustainer of it.

Barbara Seward is another critic with whose views I must take issue. She comments: "Greene sees guilts and torments not as lamentable but as the only road to pity, which itself is his road to God. For pity requires conscience...pity is only one form of love. But in Greene's view pity remains the one adequate form that is left us in a world undone by human corruption....Further, pity in a guilty world is to Greene not only the most likely but the highest possible form of love....Reflecting in a small way Christ's great act of atonement for man, pity is the one virtue that can save us from damnation."<sup>6</sup> This is exactly Scobie's sin of pride in equating Christ's crucifixion and his own "voluntary damnation", and is strongly condemned by Greene himself. He refuses to acknowledge his own limited vision and to trust God to work for the best. Greene himself stresses this fact: "I had meant the character of Scobie to enlarge on a theme which I had touched on in The Ministry of Fear - the disastrous effect on human beings of

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5 G.C. Jones, op.cit. pl41.

6 B. Seward, op.cit. pp91-92.

pity as opposed to compassion.....The character of Scobie was intended to show that pity can be the expression of an almost monstrous pride....Suicide was Scobie's inevitable end; the particular motive of his suicide, to save even God from himself, was the final twist of the screw of his inordinate pride."<sup>7</sup>

Greene was well aware that the story of Péguy does not end with his "voluntary damnation", but with his return to faith in God's mercy. Péguy saw this as the only solution to the "problem of evil" that had first driven him, in his human pride and judgement, to turn against what he saw as a cruel and arbitrary God. This fact must be taken into account when examining Scobie's end. He too must be granted that final possibility of repentance and salvation "between the stirrup and the ground". Greene advises us against claiming too readily that views expressed by his often confused and lost characters are in fact his own views. Some critics leap too easily to the conclusion that because Scobie believes suicide would be, for him, a mortal sin and so would damn him for eternity, therefore when he does commit suicide, Greene is agreeing that he has been damned, but offering in mitigation, and as criticism of a harsh and legalistic Catholic God, Scobie's motives of pity and concern for others. They see Scobie's self-identification with Christ's act on Calvary as indication of Greene's own peculiar theology.

Using the Teilhardian doctrine as a framework, it can

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7 G.Greene. Introduction to The Heart of the Matter, in The Portable Graham Greene, ed. Philip Stratford (N.Y.:Viking Press, 1973). p101.  
(All future references to this novel refer to this edition).



be seen that such oversimplistic identification of individual characters with Greene himself is mistaken. Writing about The Heart of the Matter Greene says: "I have small belief in the doctrine of eternal punishment (it was Scobie's belief not mine)."<sup>8</sup> Greene's attitude is found not in Scobie but in the priest's words, the same basic message that has been consistently given in all the novels dealt with. "For goodness' sake, Mrs Scobie, don't imagine you - or I - know a thing about God's mercy.'"<sup>9</sup>

Here, then, is Greene's position, a consistent and unified presentation of an evil world of suffering and misery, in which man is called upon to accept God's mercy in a spirit of humble trust. The fact that this is Greene's reaction to the state of man and the world does not mean that he is not concerned with presenting other reactions to it. In the persons of Ida, the lieutenant and Scobie, he is clarifying his own position by demonstrating how inadequate these characters' responses are.

If this is taken into account, how superficial and inaccurate criticisms such as Turnell's seem. "The truth is that the sensational events like the sacriligious communion and the suicide have no real motivation. The author set out to write a 'theological thriller' about a Catholic gambling with his soul...the result is that we have an incredible character used as an inadequate illustration of an impossible thesis."<sup>10</sup>

Greene has presented in his other works this concept of the mystery of God's mercy and the way it lies beyond human

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8 The Heart of the Matter op.cit.pl01

9 ibid. p367.

10 M.Turnell, op.cit. p31.

judging and understanding. As Grace is the main hope offered in The Heart of the Matter, despite man's pride and lack of understanding, the incident where it is most strikingly presented deserves a closer examination.

Jones thinks that Scobie's last words: "Dear God, I love..." are themselves sufficient for us to believe he will be saved. "It matters little that he was unable to finish his sentence, to name the object of his love, be it God, his wife, his mistress, his fellow men. The significant thing is that...[he] died professing love."<sup>11</sup>

I believe that these words of Scobie's could be an even stronger indication that Scobie has come to trust God's mercy and found salvation. Scobie has already experienced God's Grace attempting to get in (like Teilhard's "breeze" or Pinkie's "something beating") but, still in his pride, has rejected it. "I'm not pleading for mercy. I am going to damn myself, whatever that means....No I don't trust you. I've never trusted you."<sup>12</sup> He may have rejected God, but God has not rejected him. When he has taken the tablets he attempts an act of contrition but he is still trying to do it *by himself* and finds it impossible.

However God's Grace comes again seeking an entry. "It seemed as though someone outside the room were seeking him, calling him, and he made a last effort to indicate that he was here....He had a message to convey, but the darkness and the storm drove it back...and all the time...outside the world that drummed like hammer blows within his ear, someone wandered, seeking to get in, someone appealing for help,

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<sup>11</sup> G.C. Jones. op.cit. p143.

<sup>12</sup> The Heart of the Matter, pp354-5.

someone in need of him."<sup>13</sup> I find it more than coincidental that Scobie's reply: "Dear God, I love..." (Jones treats it as an unspecified declaration) is in fact the opening words of the so-called "Perfect Act of Contrition" in the Catholic Church - "Dear God, I love You above all things and am heartily sorry that I have offended You..."

It is called "Perfect" because it is an expression of sorrow for one's sins, not because of fear of punishment, but because of love for God and because sins are an offence against that love. Scobie has loved "things" before God and has refused to trust in His mercy and wisdom. Therefore I believe it is not impossible that this prayer was what Greene was hinting at in Scobie's words. If this is so, it means that Scobie has succeeded in making the act of contrition that his pride prevented him from making before, and that God's Grace, that has kept clamouring for his acceptance, has been able to bring him to that humble trust that leads to salvation, the most important factor for both Teilhard and Greene.

In view of this interpretation, I find it difficult to sympathize with the views of a critic such as Marković who claims that: "In the novels Brighton Rock, The Power and the Glory and The Heart of the Matter, the Roman Catholic God does not manage to effect a final transformation of the characters. The author fails in adapting them to the Catholic dogma. God himself undergoes a transformation. The author is probably not aware of it, but in his dilemma as to whom he should give precedence, he lets down his God to the advantage of his characters;"<sup>14</sup> and again: "the Catholic dogma which is right

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<sup>13</sup> The Heart of the Matter, p361.

<sup>14</sup> V.E. Marković, op.cit. p277.

in the centre of the work is inadvertently betrayed....The implacable Roman Catholic God punishes man for all his weaknesses, and for his exaggerated love and pity as well."<sup>15</sup>

In direct contrast to Marković's ideas, it seems to me that by examining Greene's novels in the light of Catholic practice and theology, and particularly with reference to Teilhard's formulations of the central doctrines of Catholicism, we find a sinful world, offered hope by the fact of the Incarnation, and offered salvation through the free Grace of God open to all who can receive it in trust and humility. Far from Greene's not being able to "come to terms with the Roman Catholic God", Greene very carefully presents a well crafted fictional expression of these very elements of Catholic cosmology and theology.

As <sup>in</sup> The Power and the Glory, I believe that Scobie, like the whisky priest, may have a symbolic aspect that adds to the book's overall message. While the whisky priest is a far more complicated symbol, Scobie seems to be partly an image of St. Peter denying Christ the full recognition of His power and identity. This aspect is suggested when Scobie returns rather pensively to his home after first becoming Helen's lover<sup>with</sup>, "...the sense of yet another wrong and another victim, not Louise, not Helen. Away in the town the cocks began to crow the false dawn." The other victim is Christ, who, in Catholic spirituality, is seen as "recrucified" by every commission of sin.

Another similarity may be seen in the way St. Peter's temporary lack of faith in God's control over events led him to take matters into his own hands and attempt to stop Christ's

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15 V.E. Marković, op.cit. p280.

arrest in Gethsemane, for which he was rebuked. In a similar way, as I have mentioned, Scobie lacks trust in God and in His control and mercy, and so attempts to arrange happiness and security for others, seeing himself as the only one who can do so. The image is complicated by Scobie's vision of himself as a type of Christ figure who must be sacrificed for others. It is important to remember however that one image is presented by Greene, the other is the result of Scobie's own confusion and lack of faith. Therefore when critics, such as Turnell (op.cit. pp30-31) condemn Greene for holding up a suicide as a parallel to Christ, it is important to remember that the parallel lies in Scobie's mind, not in Greene's.

Scobie's material and spiritual problems both stem from his combination of pity and pride. Both failings lead him to attempt the "organization from outside" that Teilhard condemns as existentially doomed to failure. It is these two faults that most clearly differentiate Scobie from the whisky priest in The Power and the Glory. The whisky priest has compassion and humility and refuses to sacrifice himself (although he wishes he would be "given up" by the villagers and so end his fear and pain) either to save others or himself from the pain and misery of the world. He wishes his soul could be damned in exchange for the saving of Brigitta's, but he does not damn it, he leaves it to God's judgement and mercy. When he does see himself as damned, it is at moments of temporary despair; for from the first time he chose to answer the dying woman's call instead of fleeing to safety, he has resigned himself to the will and mercy of God.

On the other hand, Scobie, dominated by pride and pity,

does exactly the opposite. He attempts to sacrifice and damn himself to seek both his own peace and to save others from misery. However the essential point in Greene's presentation is that the same mysterious mercy is held out for both of them. Their stories simply represent different reactions to the problem. The solution is the same for both.

This point becomes clearer if I again relate Greene's work to the Teilhardian concepts. For Teilhard the "Heart" is the ruling energy of the Incarnate Christ supporting, yet beyond, all creation, guiding and impelling it to the Omega point of ultimate union of God and creation. Man's response must be to be carried forward in the Christic evolutionary stream and to cling in faith and through Grace to a trust in God. He must not thrust all his energies into an attempt to alter or escape the apparent evils and "passivities of diminishment" in the world. Thus, for Teilhard, the "Heart" can be the source of salvation; whereas the human heart, in the sense of human emotion and sentimental judgement, can deflect the individual away from trust in God to reliance on man.

This is what happened to Scobie and it is precisely to show the way Scobie's "heart" led him astray from following the real "Heart" of the matter, that Greene has chosen to follow Scobie's downfall yet possible salvation. Scobie is at least partly aware of the fact that he has allowed "heart" to take over. "He had been corrupted by sentiment. Sentiment was the more dangerous because you couldn't name its price...sentiment might uncurl in the heart at a name, a photograph, even a smell remembered."<sup>16</sup> It is not by chance

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16 The Heart of the Matter, pl49.

that Greene has presented sentiment in terms of the snake, the traditional tempter from the true path.

Yusef can recognize Scobie's failing much more clearly than Scobie himself does. "Your words are harder than your heart, Major Scobie...there is a Syrian poet who wrote 'of two hearts one is always warm and one always cold: the cold heart is more precious than diamonds: the warm heart has no value and is thrown away.' 'It sounds a very bad poem to me. But I'm no judge.'" <sup>17</sup> This is exactly what Scobie is: a sentimental judge - "Scobie the Just". He will at one moment judge suicide as pardonable for one person (Pemberton) but damnation for another. "You are not going to tell me there's anything unforgiveable there, father. If you or I did it, it would be despair....We'd be damned because we know, but he didn't know a thing." <sup>18</sup>

Teilhard was well aware of this temptation to pride, the desire to control one's world. He sees "in each generation the same 'ambiguity', still identical even as it grows more pronounced, of human progress. It is this progress that [Teilhard] sees as the source of 'the heroic temptation of all times, that of the Titans, of Prometheus, of Babel and Faust; that of Christ on the mountain; [and of Scobie] a temptation as old as Earth itself, as old as the first reflective awakening of Life in the awareness of its powers'". <sup>19</sup>

This is the temptation to which Scobie succumbs, despite flashes of insight that he does lack the ultimate vision needed to judge correctly. "He had found himself over and over again in the position of a partisan, supporting as

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17 The Heart of the Matter, pp180-190.

18 ibid. p185.

19 H. de Lubac, op.cit. p114.

he believed the poor and innocent tenant against the wealthy and guilty houseowner. But he soon discovered the guilt and innocence were as relative as the wealth."<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, he sees his relationship with Louise, Helen and others in terms of a "responsibility for her happiness."<sup>21</sup> Along with this responsibility, he consistently takes over to himself (as does Ida Arnold in Brighton Rock) the divine attributes of knowledge, judgement and vengeance. "Revenge was good for the character; out of revenge grew forgiveness."<sup>22</sup>

In his conduct of the affair of the Portuguese captain and the concealed letter, he allows his head to rule his actions. "These men were not criminals, they were merely breaking regulations enforced on the shipping companies by the navicert system." It is Scobie's abrogation to himself of judgement that begins his troubles and marks most clearly his increasing assumption of the role of "God". Greene's own authorial comment on this incident emphasizes this point. "Scobie, against the strictest order, was exercising his own *imperfect judgement*." <sup>23</sup> (emphasis mine).

Atkins appears to be more concerned with seeking for material for superficial anti-Catholic jibes than with examining the importance of the incident in the overall scheme of the novel. One of his contributions to the critical study of the book is that: "Scobie is like all English Catholics, torn in his loyalties. The Portuguese bribes Scobie because he is a Roman Catholic; he would not try to

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20 The Heart of the Matter, p111.

21 ibid. p113.

22 ibid. p132.

23 ibid. p147.



bribe an English official."<sup>24</sup> The Portuguese bribes Scobie because he is Scobie, because of his weakness, sentiment and pride, that the Captain, and Yusef, can recognise much more clearly than can Scobie himself. It is this that causes Scobie to fail in his duty, not some automatic laxity in some way inherent in Catholicism itself.

For Teilhard this failure in one's duty is another fault; for man finds salvation not simply through trust in God, but, as de Lubac points out: "The purpose [of Le Milieu Divin] ...is to bring out the traditional doctrine of 'sanctification through fulfilling the duties of one's station.'"<sup>25</sup> Such duties are part of the Teilhardian "passivities" that may work towards "diminishment" or "blessedness". This failure in one's duty is an obvious point of difference between the whisky Priest and Padre José in The Power and the Glory, and it is Scobie's failing here. However Scobie's failing goes beyond this, doing what Teilhard had warned against, "seeking divine love and the divine kingdom on the same level as human affections and human progress."<sup>26</sup>

I have indicated in my earlier comments that Greene often makes use of scriptural and liturgical references to emphasize or illuminate his various ideas. In The Heart of the Matter we find the same use of the "Miserere Nobis" prayer that appeared in Brighton Rock. Scobie longs for peace: both a worldly peace that frees him from Louise's demands and some sort of spiritual peace. This is most frequently demonstrated in his plea "Give us peace". As in Brighton Rock,

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<sup>24</sup> J. Atkins, op.cit. p161.

<sup>25</sup> H. de Lubac, op.cit. p262.

<sup>26</sup> ibid. p123.

this takes on considerable significance, for, like Pinkie, Scobie offers only the third part of the threefold liturgical formula. Like Pinkie, he neglects the plea for that mercy and Grace that are the prerequisites of true peace of soul. Instead of humbling himself in a spiritual gesture of faith and trust, Scobie demands peace while withholding the very act of trust that would bring him the peace he longs for.

Another fact of man's existence that Scobie seeks to cure is that sense and state of individuation that Teilhard and Greene have emphasized in their work. Scobie again attempts to create a bond without using the only means that can succeed. As Teilhard states: "Without interior bonds of union, we have only organization imposed from outside... and all beings, even if they appear to be in contact, are separated by an unbridgeable abyss."<sup>27</sup> It is a feature of Scobie's character that he experiences occasional insights into such existential and ontological truths of man's state in the world, but these are readily overwhelmed by his pride and judgement. "If I could just arrange for her happiness first, he thought, and in the confusing night he forgot, for the while, what experience had taught him - that no human being can really understand another and no-one can arrange another's happiness."<sup>28</sup> Here the authorial Greene again emphasizes the theoretical lesson that Scobie is demonstrating in action.

The conclusion of this novel is the same as for the other works studied. In a world of evil the only solution is a blind trust in God's mercy and a recognition that it is

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27 A.V. Knight, *op.cit.* p98.

28 The Heart of the Matter, p180.

beyond human comprehension. Scobie almost reaches this truth, but is hindered by his refusal to go beyond human judgements of good and evil and to overcome sentiment enough to allow the possibility of a greater vision and greater plan than his own.

I am referring to the incident of the rescue of the shipwreck survivors. The parents of a young girl sacrificed some of their own water so that the girl might live, and yet all die. Scobie is at first overwhelmed with a sense of injustice, pointlessness, anger at God's cruelty, but there comes a moment when he sees a "hint of an explanation," a possible greater plan beyond man's understanding. "They gave up their own share of the water often...it gave them something to think about."

Even if Scobie forgets, Greene has presented the reader with part of the solution, trust in God, for man only sees (as in It's a Battlefield) part of the action. Greene has presented the reader with a fallible human character whose response to a world of evil is clouded by a pride that forces him to attempt to judge and control it. But Greene's solution for the reader is the same as Teilhard's, and the same as he has given in It's a Battlefield, Brighton Rock, and The Power and the Glory and as will find its fullest expression in The End of the Affair, "Don't imagine you - or I - know a thing about God's mercy."

Wyndham makes the comment that Greene in The Heart of the Matter "fully and finally develops the themes that have run through all his novels - the pity, fear, love and despair, the search of a man for salvation. He has, too, carried to its conclusion the implications of his own faith - the love

and mercy and mystery of God."<sup>29</sup> But I believe that it is rather to The End of the Affair one must now turn, for Greene's fullest expression of the mystery of Grace and divine love.

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29 F. Wyndham, Graham Greene, Longmans, Green and Co. p21, 1968.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE APPALLING STRANGENESS OF THE MERCY OF GOD:

#### "THE END OF THE AFFAIR"

If, as I believe, The Power and the Glory is Greene's strongest presentation of the central Incarnation element in the divine plan of salvation as seen by Péguy, Teilhard and Greene himself, The End of the Affair is the novel that deals at most length with the element of the "mystery" and "strangeness" of the mercy and love of God, and with the mysterious process of faith.

For some critics, the novel seems to move too far from the realities of life and to become an artificial vehicle for the presentation of Greene's so-called "idiosyncratic religion". However, I find it impossible to agree with this interpretation. For instance, Martin Turnell sums up the book thus: "Greene takes a banal situation - two men and a woman - and gives it a peculiar twist - it is the end of a love affair, but a love affair in which there is more hate than love. 'Hate' throbs disconcertingly through the book - leaving us with the feeling that we have in this novel the projection of painful personal equations on to imaginary characters. The author's intentions - his unconscious ones - are summed up by the cremation of the saint at the end: the symbolical destruction of a loved and hated religion."<sup>1</sup>

I am afraid I must conclude, as I have already stated in other chapters, that some critics of Greene (and Atkins, Turnell and Marković are three that spring most readily to mind) seem to have allowed a combination of anti-Catholic bias

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<sup>1</sup> M.Turnell, op.cit. p32.

and an inadequate understanding of Catholic theology and practice to misguide their interpretations of Greene's beliefs and intent. A main contention in Turnell's criticism is that there is "something wrong with the quality of the religion" in Greene's novels and that this is reflected in his use of language - "flashy and trite".<sup>2</sup> I have already referred to some examples of the careful consideration and craftsmanship evident in Greene's vocabulary, style, imagery and authorial control, and I have attempted to show that Greene's religion viewed in the light of Teilhard's explanation of the doctrine of salvation, is consistent, theologically sound, and orthodox Catholicism (although his emphasis may be stronger in certain areas than in others).

However, my major disagreement with Turnell's comment on The End of the Affair is over his criticism of the "love" aspect of the novel. Turnell seems predisposed to look for the negative and destructive in Greene, and consequently he emphasizes the element of hate in the love affair and sees the relationships simply as a "banal situation".

As already stated, I believe this work to be Greene's strongest expression of the Teilhardian concept of God's mercy and love; and it is in the examination of this very so-called "banal situation" that the depth of Greene's analyses of human and divine love and mercy becomes apparent. Far from a simple and sordid relationship of two men with one woman, Greene offers the reader the complete range of the "love relationship".

Greene presents the originally platonic yet restrained

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2 M. Turnell, op.cit. p19.

"love" between Bendrix and Henry: Bendrix "felt something [for Henry], nothing so extreme as love, perhaps nothing more than a companionship in misfortune."<sup>3</sup> However, this relationship progresses, under Sarah's influence, until at the end, having cuckolded Henry, Bendrix has yet developed a genuine concern as shown by his actions in putting biscuits by Henry's bed in case he should awake hungry. He develops a sympathy and concern for Parkis, the shabby detective, whom at first he merely used. "I had become nearly human enough to think of another person's trouble."<sup>4</sup> This is only one of the varieties of love that Greene explores and develops.

Another variety is Henry's loyal and selfless love for his wife Sarah, that allows him to take her back and forgive her even after he is aware of her adultery with Bendrix.

In contrast with this is Bendrix's selfish and possessive physical love for Sarah. He would "rather be dead or see you dead then with another man - that's ordinary human love. Ask anybody...anybody who loves is jealous."<sup>5</sup> Bendrix is still to learn there is a divine love that is pure and unselfish and he will experience its effects in Sarah and fight against it himself. Sarah has already made him realize that love is an emotion beyond mere physical lust. He can no longer find satisfaction in mere sex with prostitutes. "My passion for Sarah had killed simple lust forever. Never again would I be able to enjoy a woman without love."<sup>6</sup>

Sarah also finds herself torn between varieties of love. On the one hand there is her sexually arid but dutiful love for Henry. "She explained with dreary tenderness, 'Poor Henry.

3 The End of the Affair, p8.

4 ibid. p45.

5 ibid. p63.

6 ibid. p66.

It's [orgasm] never happened - not in the whole ten years."<sup>7</sup>  
 On the other, there is her vital and compelling love for Bendrix, but it is of a higher quality than Bendrix's, less selfish and possessive, as Bendrix himself realizes. At their first meeting he had noticed Sarah's " beauty and happiness and way of touching people with her hands as though she loved them "<sup>8</sup> and later realizes the inadequacy of his standards of love, for he had " measured love by the extent of my jealousy and by that standard of course she could not love me at all. " <sup>9</sup>

Over and above these various possibilities for the love relationship however, there is Sarah's increasing and inescapable love for God, a love that demands and fills the whole person. "We can love with our minds, but can we love only with our minds. Love extends itself all the time, so that we can even love with our senseless nails."<sup>10</sup> This love is offered to any, and Bendrix, throughout the novel, fights desperately against acknowledging that love and responding to it.

Therefore, I contend that far from being a novel through which, as Turnell claims, "hate throbs disconcertingly", Greene presents us with the complete range of love relationships: eros, philos, caritas, and agape, with the last, the loving mercy and Grace of God, presented as the most complete and fulfilling relationship of all.

Turnell sees the book simply in terms of the end or conclusion of a rather sordid affair between Bendrix and Sarah. I believe the title holds more significance

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7 The End of the Affair, p55.

8 ibid. p24.

9 ibid. p61.

10 ibid. pl31.



than this. The "end" is not simply a conclusion, but an "end" in the teleological sense of a purpose or goal. The "affair" or matter of the book - the relationships between the characters - is acted out so as to show them being led towards their true "end" in the scheme of salvation. Both characters begin the affair on a merely sexual level and both for selfish reasons, Bendrix in order to use Sarah for information, and Sarah in order to relieve the boredom of her life with Henry. The affair develops into a sexual possessiveness and sexual fidelity, continues to develop into a true "loving" relationship, from which point it leaps to a far greater dimension as divine love enters the affair as a result of Sarah's unselfish sacrifice on Bendrix's behalf. Their experience in love gives them a basis for experiencing and recognising the purity and total involvement of the divine love.

I see the title as important therefore, in two senses. The "end" (conclusion) of the affair signifies for both Bendrix and Sarah their movement into their more profound "affair" with God. At the same time the "end" (purpose) of their love affair has been (although they were unaware of it) to bring them to the ultimate love relationship with God.

It is true that hatred is a constantly recurring term in The End of the Affair, but it is important to remember that it is not the authorial Greene who presents the hatred, but Sarah and Bendrix who protest their hatred of God because they fear what is demanded of them if they should abandon themselves to this love. Bendrix also proclaims his hatred for God and for Sarah because he reacts against the force that has deprived him of Sarah's love, not realizing that her love for him has simply moved to a higher level. He

comes eventually to recognize, as did Sarah, that the very admission of his hatred for God is a recognition of God's existence, and once that has been accepted, one is drawn to ever greater commitment and self-sacrifice. Thus the hatred in the book is part of a realistic psychological portrayal of confused individuals coming to an experience of the mystery of God's Grace, rather than a dominant theme overshadowing the novel.

Greene's view of the world remains consistent with that of his earlier works. The world is still essentially an evil one, a place of Teilhardian diminishments that "form the darkest element and the most despairingly useless years of our life" <sup>11</sup> and one in which even nature and environment lie darkly about man. The book opens with Bendrix recalling "that black wet January night on the Common in 1966." <sup>12</sup> The sense of monotony, of unrelieved misery and depression is strong. "How can I disinter the human character from the heavy scene - the daily newspaper, the daily meal, the traffic grinding towards Battersea." <sup>13</sup>

The world is morally decayed as well. In Parkis and his son, there is an illustration of the corrupting environment in which even a search for heroic models becomes confused and frustrated. Parkis has named his son after the heroic and pure seeker for the Holy Grail (or so he believed). "After Sir Lancelot, sir. Of the Round Table....He found the Holy Grail." However, he has mistakenly named his son after a traitor and adulterer, as Bendrix informs him: "That was Galahad. Lancelot was found in bed with Guinevere." <sup>14</sup>

The world can at first offer Bendrix no worldly hope.

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- 11 Le Milieu Divin  
 12 The End of the Affair, pl.  
 13 ibid. p24.  
 14 ibid. p.90.

Like the whisky Priest in The Power and the Glory, Pinkie in Brighton Rock, and Scobie in The Heart of the Matter, Bendrix experiences the Teilhardian sense of individuation and abandonment, not yet having found the solution, only the problem, "...grey cumulus...the shot tower stood black in the winter light among the ruined warehouses...the fruit-sellers cried like animals in the dark. It was as if the shutters were going up on the whole world; soon we would all of us be abandoned to our own devices."<sup>15</sup> In this lonely world, Bendrix feels himself "lost in a strange region: I have no map."<sup>16</sup>

The fact that offers Greene hope in such a world, as I have noted in the discussion on The Power and the Glory, is the Incarnation. Bendrix observes it without yet fully realizing its meaning or implication. He is faced with the mystery of God in man, the essential element for Péguy, Teilhard and Greene in their concept of salvation, when he visits Smythe (seeking for his supposed rival for Sarah's love). "I stared up at the strawberry mark...and thought, there is no safety anywhere: a hunchback, a cripple - they all have the trigger that sets love off."<sup>17</sup> Sarah has a similar revelation, recalling the whisky priest's vision in prison in The Power and the Glory. "God was made man. He was Henry with his astigmatism, Richard with his strawberry mark."

Against the background of the miserable world, and made possible by the fact of the Incarnation, Greene follows the journey of the two main characters from simple secularism

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15 The End of the Affair, p77.

16 ibid. p56.

17 ibid. p95

and materialism, through a turmoil of love and hate that challenges the irresistible attraction of God's love pulling them towards faith.

Sarah's faith comes directly from her personal experience of evil in the world. When Bendrix is buried by a bomb blast, she prays "to anything that might exist."<sup>18</sup> Without any clear understanding or awareness of God, she has made the first step in opening herself up to the possibility of His power. "When you are hopeless enough, you can pray for miracles." She does not make Scobie's mistake of either condemning God in terms of human judgement of good and evil, or of taking control of matters into her own hands. Her response is that which Teilhard and Greene present as the solution, a humble admission of helplessness and a trusting call for help. This incident also marks the growth of her love from the purely worldly level to a higher level of self sacrifice, whereby she is prepared to give up Bendrix's love in exchange for his safety.

Sarah's journey is not always a smooth one and she must struggle constantly with doubt, resentment, and the demands of the self. "I want ordinary corrupt human love. Dear God, you know. I want your pain, but I don't want it now."<sup>19</sup> Like the whisky priest and Scobie, she has difficulty believing she is worth saving. But unlike Scobie, she can risk the leap beyond the area of cloudy human understanding and trust all to God's will. "What do you expect me to do now God? Where do I go from here?...Where do you see this lovely thing [the soul] in me - in me of all people?"

She turns in desperation to the Rationalist, Richard

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18 The End of the Affair, p84.

19 ibid. p106.

Smythe, in the hope that his atheism will disprove God's existence and so release her from her vow. However her relationship with God is not simply an intellectual one. It is a new ontological relationship through the action of Grace and now beyond her control. She finds that she herself is becoming an instrument for the working of Grace as she prays to the God he was promising to cure her of: "'Let me be of use to him.'"<sup>20</sup>

Later Sarah ponders on the bitterness and strength of Smythe's atheism and she reaches an understanding of the way that surface hatred is at very least an acknowledgement of the importance of what is hated, and often simply a defence reaction against feeling cut off from the object one pretends to hate. "The devil didn't exist, and God didn't exist, [for Smythe] but all his hatred was for the good fairy tale, not the wicked one. Why?...I've hated Maurice, but would I have hated him if I hadn't loved him too?"<sup>21</sup> Greene is offering the reader a way of interpreting Bendrix's later protestations of hatred of God and Sarah.

From this point, Sarah's growth in true love and faith, as revealed in her diary, advances quickly. Recalling the origin of her appeal to God, she wonders: "I said 'Let him be alive' not believing in You, and my disbelief made no difference to You. You took it into Your love and accepted it like an offering....I wasn't afraid of the desert anymore

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20 The End of the Affair, p129.

21 ibid. p133.

because you were there."<sup>22</sup>

Greene is presenting us with a fictional representation of Teilhard's beliefs. Under the influence of Grace, and through faith, Sarah is moving forward on the individual level in the evolutionary stream, as she experiences "expanding consciousness - an awareness of the 'great reality!..of something within oneself."<sup>23</sup> She is also attempting to carry out the first and best of Teilhard's three basic possibilities for man in the world, as one who "will repress [her] taste for the tangible and force [herself] to confine [her] concern to purely religious objects, and [she] will try to live in a world that [she] has diminished by banishing the largest possible number of earthly objects."<sup>24</sup> Sarah demonstrates this response. "I know I am only beginning to love, but already I want to abandon everything, everybody but you."<sup>25</sup>

Along with her increasing diminishment of self, Greene demonstrates an increasingly clear working out of her faith since her first vague pleas "to anything that might exist." She now wishes she had "a prayer that wasn't me, me, me," and can say: "I believe you were born, I believe you died for us, I believe you are God. Teach me to love."<sup>26</sup>

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22 The End of the Affair, pl35. Note: I have noticed that there seems to be an inconsistency in the use of upper and lower case 'Y', when Sarah is referring to God. I examined the possibility that Greene's choice of case might reflect varying emotional states on Sarah's part. However the usage seems so random, and inconsistently applied, that I have abandoned this possible explanation and at present can offer no other.

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24 Le Milieu Divin, p52.

25 The End of the Affair, p94.

26 ibid. pl44.

Sarah now responds to the problem of evil through the strength of her new faith and love, no longer simply a theoretical faith in God's "strange" ways, but a practical manifestation of that faith as well. In answer to Smythe's question: "Why should I love a God who gives a child this [birthmark]?" she kisses the mark. However, what is more important is that she comes to realize that such acts of dramatic and "heroic" virtue are comparatively easy, but everyday practical virtue and compassion are just as necessary. "If I could love a leper's sores, couldn't I love the boringness of Henry....I want the dramatic always."<sup>27</sup>

The climax of Sarah's faith is presented in her last letter to Bendix, read after her death. "He's got mercy, only it's such an odd sort of mercy, it sometimes looks like punishment....I believe the whole bag of tricks, there's nothing I don't believe."<sup>28</sup> The reader cannot help but notice the similarity of this to both the priest's "appalling strangeness of the mercy of God" in Brighton Rock and the whisky priest's comment in The Power and the Glory: "We wouldn't recognize that love. It might even look like hate. It would be enough to scare us - God's love."<sup>29</sup> In the works that span a period of nearly twenty years such close similarities in message are for me clear indicators of the consistency and unity in Greene's doctrine.

Like the whisky priest, Sarah seems to follow the path that Teilhard marked out for the struggling Christian. She seems to successfully advance through "successive crises, each step forward being paid for by 'a vast series of

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27 The End of the Affair, p144.

28 Ibid. p178.

29 The Power and the Glory, pp199-200.

disorders and sufferings'...finally the progress achieved will be no true progress unless spirit finally emerges from the adventure as the undisputed victor."<sup>30</sup> Greene assures the reader that Sarah's spirit is victor, and even after her death, Grace works through her even to the extent of miraculously intervening in the natural world.

Bendrix begins his journey to salvation completely immersed in the material world, his relationships having importance to him only to the extent they enable him to manipulate others for his own benefit.

However, he becomes increasingly aware of being swept along by something beyond his control. As Teilhard says: "A breeze passes in the night....No-one can compel the spirit."<sup>31</sup> And Bendrix ponders about his own control over events; "I am beginning to doubt whether anything I can do will ever alter the course of events. Henry and I are allies now, in our fashion, but are we allies against an infinite tide?"<sup>32</sup> He comes to long for an escape from his sense of guilt about the affair and from responsibility and life generally, so that, when the bomb explodes, he feels for a while "completely free from anxiety, jealousy, insecurity, hate";<sup>33</sup> and hopes for happiness and oblivion. However, he revives to a "sense of great emptiness". Pinkie and Scobie also have shown this desire for oblivion, freedom from responsibility.

Learning of God's part in Sarah's change, Bendrix's response is one of hatred and disbelief that he could have played a part in that change. "I hate You if You exist, I

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30 H. de Lubac, *op.cit.* pp34-5.

31 *Le Milieu Divin*.

32 *The End of the Affair*, p75.

33 *The End of the Affair*, p82.



remembered what she'd said to Richard Smythe - that I had taught her to believe."<sup>34</sup> God in his "appalling strangeness" had used Bendrix himself as an instrument to nourish Sarah's faith, just as the Rationalist's fanatic<sup>al</sup> hatred of God has led Sarah to true love of Him. However, Bendrix recalls what Sarah has discovered about love and hate: "I mustn't be like Richard Smythe, I mustn't hate, for if I were really to hate I would believe, and if I were to believe, what a triumph for You and her."<sup>35</sup>

Bendrix's confidence in his ability to remain aloof from this mysterious influence of God's Grace in unsuspected events and persons, is further shaken when he learns of Sarah's infant baptism, itself ironically done out of a motive of petty hatred and revenge on the part of Sarah's mother. "I felt fear, like a man who has committed the all-but perfect crime and watches the first unexpected crack in the wall of his deception."<sup>36</sup> Bendrix is experiencing what the whisky priest warned of: "It would be enough to scare us - God's love."

His faith is further prodded when the girl he rather unwillingly intended to seduce, as a spite to Sarah's memory, is "saved" in response to his mental plea to Sarah to prevent him from doing it. "I asked you to save that girl from me, and you pushed your mother between us - or so they might say. But if I start believing that, then I have to believe in your God. I'd have to love your God. I'd rather love the men you slept with."<sup>37</sup> Bendrix is still struggling, in his

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34 The End of the Affair, p155.

35 ibid. p167.

36 ibid. p199.

37 ibid. p227.

pride, to maintain some control over his life, but he realizes that his faith is growing despite his defiance. For it comes not from himself alone, but from God's grace at work in him. He is afraid of it because he has some understanding of the demands it makes on man and of the place it would take as man's highest value, "...loving Him there'd be no pleasure in anything at all with Him away."<sup>38</sup> He fears a repeat, on the much greater spiritual level, of what happened with Sarah, his commitment to her and his misery when her love seemed withdrawn.

The next stage in Bendrix's conversion in his bombardment with physical signs of that very presence he fears so much to acknowledge. He learns that Smythe's birthmark was miraculously removed, that Parkis's son has been miraculously cured. He feels overwhelmed, pursued. "Her mother at the funeral, the child's dream. Is this going to continue day by day? I felt like a swimmer who has overpassed his strength and knows the tide is stronger than himself."<sup>39</sup> He is brought to the jumping-off place, to the point where, like Sarah, it is possible to abandon all in faith. "I have no peace.... I'm a man of hate. But I don't feel much hatred....What I chiefly felt was less hate than fear. For if this God exists ...and if even you...can change like this, we could all be saints by leaping as you leapt, by shutting the eyes and leaping once and for all: if you are a saint, it's not so difficult to be a saint."<sup>40</sup> Although he continues desperately to resist, his ultimate "defeat" by God's Grace is assured. His final address to God is not an attack, but a prayer.

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38 The End of the Affair, p225.

39 ibid. p234.

40 ibid. p235.

"Oh God, you've done enough, you've robbed me of enough. I'm too tired and old to learn to love, leave me alone for ever."<sup>41</sup>

This is the novel I have chosen to complete my study of Greene's doctrine in the light of Teilhard's writings. It can be seen that elements common to Teilhard and Greene are found in all the works covered, the problem of a sinful world, various ways of responding to the problem, the Incarnation as the means of hope for man, the need for a humble trust, and acceptance of the mystery of God's mercy and Grace.

The End of the Affair is, I believe, the fullest presentation of the final aspects of salvation, the need for trust in God, and the "strangeness" of His mercy and love. Greene has presented the reader with a sinful world, within which he has shown the growth in faith of two individuals as they experience the mystery of God's love.

Greene retains an interest in the area of salvation, but his greatest presentation of it is found in the books I have discussed; his later works were to become increasingly devoted to the ethical aspects of man's condition, rather than the more mystical and spiritual aspects he shares with Teilhard de Chardin. It seems fitting, somehow, that The End of the Affair should also mark the end of Greene's period of intense concern with the world, man and God, at their deepest levels.

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41 The End of the Affair, p237.

## CONCLUSION

I have attempted to demonstrate that, despite the negative opinions of some critics, Greene's theological and cosmological views seem to give evidence of clear consistency and unity within the scope of the five novels I have selected. In the works after these five Greene seems increasingly to take as his concern the ethical and political situation of man and to give ever less consideration to the "greater realities" of God, salvation and man's place in a created and fallen world.

Within the selected works there is a consistent development of his main themes. Beginning with It's a Battlefield Greene presents the reader with that vision of the state of fallen man that he has in common with Teilhard and Péguy. The world is a place of misery, confusion, injustice and evil. In Brighton Rock the moral and spiritual aspect of this evil world is developed, but increasing attention is given to the struggles of the various characters within the novel to find some solution. This trend continues through The Power and the Glory, The Heart of the Matter, and culminates in The End of the Affair where the evil world is little more than a shadowy backdrop against which Bendrix's and Sarah's journeys to salvation are painstakingly worked out.

Greene offers many examples of characters coming to grips with the Teilhardian "diminishments." Some such as Ida Arnold, Scobie and Richard Smythe, lack the trust to accept them and to turn them, thereby, into "blessed passivities," while others such as the whisky priest and Sarah can, by their acceptance of them, move forward in the Christic evolutionary stream.

Teilhard offers three basic possibilities for man in the world. As he says: "...either the Christian will repress his taste for the tangible and force himself to confine his concern to purely religious objects, and he will try to live in a world that he has diminished by banishing the largest possible number of earthly objects; or else harnessed by that inward conflict which hampers him, he will dismiss the evangelical counsels and decide to lead what seems to him a complete and human life; or else again, and this is the most usual case, he will give up any attempt to make sense of his situation, he will never belong wholly to God, nor ever wholly to things; incomplete in his own eyes and insecure in the eyes of his fellows, he will gradually acquiesce in a double life."<sup>1</sup>

It is important to note, however, that those are basic possibilities, and the continuum from one to the other has many gradations. As characters in Teilhard's first classification Greene presents Sarah in The End of the Affair and the whisky priest in The Power and the Glory, both struggling to respond to God's call of Grace and leave behind their more earthly concerns. In Teilhard's second group, Greene offers such characters as Ida Arnold in Brighton Rock, the Commissioner in It's a Battlefield, the lieutenant in The Power and the Glory, and Richard Smythe in The End of the Affair. All are seeking to cure the world with the world's solutions, Rationalism, material reconstruction, human justice and "an eye for an eye." All are doomed to failure in this world that they see in terms of "a dead end and...a closed system."<sup>2</sup>

Greene presents Teilhard's third possibility particularly in the character of Scobie in The Heart of the Matter. The

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1 Le Milieu Divin, p52.

2 A.V. Knight, op.cit. p93.

novel traces his deception both of himself and others as he tries to assume the role of God. A similar condition is manifested in Pinkie in Brighton Rock and Bendrix in The End of the Affair as they struggle, torn between two attractions, the world and the irresistible pull of Grace.

Greene's prime concern is, however, with the true solution, not with the problem or the other possible responses to it. That solution is, as for Teilhard, a loving and humble trust in God's mercy. This is man's proper response, faith in God and in His judgement. Greene presents this faith very clearly in the persons of the whisky priest and Sarah. They may have moments of doubt and may even resent their faith, but they cannot ultimately deny it.

The other side of the solution for Teilhard and Greene is the incomprehensible fact of God's Grace. In all of the works selected this can be seen as a consistent motif, usually voiced by one of the priest characters as "the appalling strangeness of the mercy of God," and a love that might even "scare us."

This, then, is my contention. Despite the difficulty of at present establishing a connection between Greene and Teilhard beyond the circumstantial facts of common interest, the availability of Teilhard's works and Greene's opportunity to see them, I believe that there is a very close similarity between the ideas of the two writers and that by examining the selected novels in the light of Teilhard's ideas, Greene's work takes on a unity, consistency and inner cohesiveness not previously as apparent.

Each novel individually gives evidence of the working out of Teilhard's ideas from problem and response to solution; while the five works, taken as a unified statement, also show a presentation of the problem and solution. Greene begins with

the issue of the problem of evil and the state of the fallen world as dealt with in It's a Battlefield, advances through various aspects of man's possible responses and puts an increasing emphasis on the solution through faith and Grace, as found in Brighton Rock, The Power and the Glory, and The Heart of the Matter. His depiction culminates in an almost mystical presentation of the incomprehensibility and power of God's Grace in The End of the Affair.

Having given his most complete statement of his belief in this latter novel, Greene turned to more ethical and practical considerations about man in the world. The great concerns he shared with Teilhard occasionally emerge, but his great statement on man, the world and salvation, had been made in these five books.

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